Homilies

Of Monsignore

Scipione De' Ricci

Bishop

Of Pistoia and Prato

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Homilies

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I. Homily Delivered During the Solemn Mass in the Parish Church of Sammarcello, 10 February 1784

I could not have come before you, Brothers and beloved Children, for any better reason than the present one — an occasion on which, full of gratitude for the many benefits which the Lord, through the hand of our Pious and Loving Sovereign, has poured out so generously upon this Province, you render Him your most heartfelt thanks through acts of charity and Christian piety. In fulfilling this duty toward God, you also fulfill the further duty owed to him who represents God's place here on Earth, praying that the Lord fill our Beneficent Sovereign with His heavenly blessings. Among the duties we owe to him, as Minister of God, one is to pray for him in particular. The holy prophet Jeremiah, and his faithful companion in lament, Baruch, already recognized this obligation toward that very sovereign who held the People of God in bondage — how then could we fail to recognize it toward a Prince to whom the Lord grants the grace of regarding his subjects as children, and of looking upon the provinces as lands that look to him for their happiness? In the fuller Instruction that I have published this day on our duties toward the Sovereign, and toward whoever holds his place, I have shown you that his authority comes from God, who, being invisible, has willed to give us in him a visible image of His authority upon this Earth. I have declared to you that there can never be any cause to fail him in the respect due to him, since it is an essential point of Religion to show him reverence and obedience.

Hence it follows that one cannot defraud the excise without sin; one cannot, without offending God, neglect the payment of tributes and taxes, which are not some gratuitous gift but a debt owed to the Minister and Lieutenant of the King of Kings, the Master of the Universe. I have reminded you that the character of a Christian requires that we fulfill these duties out of conscience, out of love of justice, and not out of fear of punishment. The base notion of observing the Laws only outwardly, only on the surface, and solely to avoid punishment, belongs to Hypocrites and Pharisees. Guided by the light of a holy and divine Religion, we measure our observance of precepts by the charity that clothes our actions. Animated by this spirit, as I have told you, and acknowledging the other essential duty we have of praying for the Sovereign, we offer unceasing prayers to God on his behalf, that He may guide him in all his steps, enlighten him in his judgments, and, granting him the gifts and virtues of a Great Prince, may cause him to exercise them with the spirit of a truly Christian Prince. I have asked my brother parish priests, in order to draw in those less attentive to this duty, and have made it for them, by divine authority, an express command to set these duties before you frequently, to explain their scope, and to make their spirit clear to you. I do not doubt that their charity will fail to instruct you on a point so essential to your consolation and to the happiness of the State.

You will not hear, my most beloved Brothers, any new doctrine. What Jesus Christ has taught, what the Church, the faithful keeper of His divine word, has handed down to us through her lawful Pastors — this is what I preach to you. New doctrines are those which, descending from

age to age, come through unlawful channels from impure sources, from false apostles, and do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as their author. Beware of these, and of the reckless men who peddle them. Do not let yourselves be seduced either by an appearance of feigned humility, or by vain, pompous promises of temporal and spiritual happiness offered in reward for false practices of piety. Close your ears to the fables of these apostles of falsehood, who, sowing division between the lawful Pastors and the Flock, rail against the doctrine of Jesus Christ, passing it off as something new, in order to substitute error for it, or to keep you fixed in error. Abhor the speech of those who rise up against lawful Powers, censuring the ordinances of Princes, the measures of their Ministers, the decrees of Magistrates. These may indeed sometimes abuse their authority, but who are they who would summon to judgment One who acknowledges no superior but God, to whom alone the Sovereign is answerable for his actions? Whoever instills in you maxims contrary to this lawful subordination is a false apostle, who contradicts the Gospel, who tends to overturn the order established by God, and who prepares for you the way to eternal damnation. Ah, merciful Lord, never permit that into this portion of the Flock which You have given me to guard there should come hirelings and unlawful shepherds, to scatter false and erroneous maxims, to bring in doctrines contrary to those which the Holy Apostles have proclaimed to us. And you, Venerable Parish Priests, Priests, my most beloved Brothers, who together with me, by divine ordination, cooperate in forming Jesus Christ in the hearts of all the faithful, be watchful in guarding that portion of the Flock entrusted to you: regard yourselves as spiritual Fathers of all these families; do not so easily entrust their care to others; instruct them frequently in what they owe to God, to their fellow men, and to their Superiors.

And you, dearest Children, whom I love tenderly in Jesus Christ, be docile to the voice of your Pastor. Consider that Jesus Christ, whose Religion we profess, in coming into the World did not disturb the order of Republics, did not overthrow States. The Kingdom that He came to found is not of this World, but wholly heavenly and spiritual. He indeed was the first to give the example of submission to the lawful Powers established by God upon this Earth, paying tribute, and, having become obedient even unto death, consummated His Sacrifice upon the Cross through the most unjust sentence of the public Power. Consider, my most beloved Brothers, that just as He willed that there should be Ministers to govern you in matters wholly spiritual, so too He ordained that in temporal matters there should likewise be one who might represent the visible image of His authority, which is itself invisible. Yet those whom He has established as the trustees of this authority stand in need of the full strength of His Grace, that they may not abuse it. Wisely, then, have you acted in taking occasion, from the benefits which the Lord has bestowed on you through the Sovereign, to implore upon him, and upon the whole Royal Family, the continuance of heavenly graces.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords, You who apportion the Provinces and the Kingdoms, who appoint the Princes of Your People, the Judges of Your Children, hear the prayers of this people gathered in the name of Jesus Christ. Grant that our Sovereign may ever grasp the mystery of Your will; send him, from Your heavenly Sanctuary, from the Throne of Your

majesty, the divine Wisdom, that she may inspire in him what is pleasing to You, that she may guide him in all his actions, that she may protect him with the strength of her grace. May she instruct him in what he owes to You as a simple believer, and in what he owes to You as a Prince, so that, ever obeying whatever You command, he may use his authority for the observance of Your divine precepts throughout all his Realms, until, in his last old age, he exchange his temporal Government for an eternal Kingdom, where the eminence of his glory may be proportioned to his constant care in bringing his subjects to share in it. Grant too, O Lord, that this same divine Wisdom may ever assist the August Consort of our Prince, so that the fragrance of her Christian virtues may make her the ornament of the Throne, the admiration of the Peoples, who, in the fruitfulness with which You have enriched her, will take comfort in seeing revived, in the whole Royal Family, the hope of so many Nations. Finally, we pray You, O Lord, for all those who administer justice and who are the trustees of the Sovereign's authority. Give to all who govern us a heart docile to Your Law, a spirit wholly devoted to its observance. Grant, finally, to all of us the grace to obey out of conscience, so that, protected and guided by You in this life — Sovereign and subjects alike — we may all be made worthy, in the next, to enjoy that eternal Kingdom which You hold in readiness for us in Heaven.

II. Homily for the Consecration of the Church of S. Germano al Santonuovo, 18 September 1785

In the wholly holy and spiritual gladness with which we ought, my most beloved Children, to celebrate the Feast of this day, we can do no better than to enter into the sentiments of St. Bernard (*Sermo* I, *In Dedicatione Ecclesiae*), who rightly leads us to reflect that this is the Feast of our own Consecration. For indeed, what holiness could these Stones themselves possess, that we should celebrate a Feast on their account? Do not fix your consideration, as the carnal Jews did, upon these stones which form the material and outward Temple; consider rather that this Temple has been sanctified in order to teach us that we ourselves must be a living and animated Temple, in which God may continually receive a holy and spiritual worship: *Dominum Christum sanctificate in cordibus vestris* (1 Peter 3:15). God, who is the eternal, incomprehensible, and boundless Spirit, cannot be confined to any place; He cannot be contained except within Himself. He Himself is, properly speaking, His own Temple. Yet to accommodate Himself to our weakness, and to the present condition of things, He has willed that Temples be raised up for the gathering of His children — those whom He has adopted in Jesus Christ, and who, by worshipping Him in Christ and with Christ, might become His true worshippers. Here He certainly dwells in a particular manner, because Jesus Christ is truly present in the Sacrament, and because here He works the greatest wonders of His infinite mercy — in the offering of the bloodless Sacrifice, in the administration of the Sacraments, in the dispensing of the divine word. But all of this, my most beloved Children, is for our sake. And so St. Bernard rightly observes that in all of us there must be spiritually accomplished what has visibly been done upon the walls of this Church. The sprinkling with water, the Inscription you have seen, the Anointing of the Crosses, the lighted Candles — all of this has been done by me as Minister of God and Vicar of Jesus Christ, in this material and visible Church. These very same things Jesus Christ, the eternal High Priest, works daily within us in an invisible manner. He sprinkles our souls with hyssop, that we may be purified and cleansed and made white as snow, bathing us with that precious water which flowed from His side, the fountain of mercy. He writes His Law not on tablets of stone, but in our hearts; and so that the knowledge of His Law may be matched by the practice of its precepts, He invisibly anoints with oil the cross we must carry — that is to say, He aids us with His almighty Grace, and strengthens our weak nature, so that we may crucify ourselves and our carnal desires together with Him in God, suffering for love of Him the labors and tribulations of this life. Then our faith shines before men, and by it we are made worthy afterward to enjoy heavenly and eternal blessedness. This Feast of the Consecration, then, as you can clearly see, my most beloved Children, is yours — not only because it is the Feast of that Temple where you will implore from God the graces you need, and where you will benefit from the Bread of life by hearing the divine Word and receiving the Sacraments — but even more, because this is the Feast of your very selves, of your own consecration.

Remember, then, that since the Sacrament of Baptism has consecrated you and made you Temples of God, you must honor yourselves and the holiness of this Temple; you must adorn

it with good works, you must make of it a house of prayer. Churches are destined for nothing else but the worship of God, prayer to Him for our needs, and the offering to Him of the holy Sacrifice. Whoever should profane and violate this material Temple, thus consecrated, of how grave a crime would he not be guilty? Which of you would not shudder with horror to see someone throw filth upon the sacred Altar, or fill the Tabernacle with defilement? God has declared that He will send to perdition whoever should profane it: *Si quis Templum Dei violaverit, disperdet illum Deus* (1 Corinthians 3:17). But of what Temple do you think the Apostle Paul was chiefly speaking? He speaks of us, who are the Temple of God, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells: *Templum Dei estis, et Spiritus Dei habitat in vobis*; and therefore he said that it is Holy, and that if anyone profanes it, *disperdet illum Deus*.

Each of you is the guardian of this Temple. Those sacred anointings, those ceremonies used at the Dedication of this Church, are figures and images of the divine Spirit, whose inward anointing and wholly spiritual gifts consecrate us to God in Baptism. That, as I noted above, was our first Dedication, our own Consecration. Let us take care not to profane this Temple, so holy, and, considering that the Jews were punished as rebels, let us fear lest we be punished as sacrilegious profaners of the holiness of God and of His Temple. Let us honor it, then, and respect it, forming of it the most sublime idea. Let us not profane it with sinful actions, with unjust and corrupt thoughts and desires, making our own feelings serve sin. This would be to dishonor it, to violate its holiness, making it an object of the wrath of God. Yet it is not enough to guard against dishonoring and profaning this Temple. We must also beautify and adorn it through the practice of good works, through the exercise of Christian virtues. Be subject to your Sovereign, obey his Laws out of conscience, taking care never to defraud him of the honor and the tributes you owe him by the command of God; be subordinate to all those who stand in the place of lawful superiors over you; respect and heed the voice of the Pastor of your souls, honor all, love one another as Brothers with a spirit of Christian Charity; bear with patience the labors of life, the injuries, the burdens, with that same meekness of which Christ Jesus left us the example, who, though He was innocence itself, was treated as a deceiver. These, my most beloved Children, according to the teaching of the Apostle St. Peter (1 Peter 2:12), are the ornaments of the holy Temple of God which is your soul.

A word also to you, O Women, in the name of God, and in the very phrases of the same Apostle Peter (ibid.). Do not let your ornament consist in an elaborate arrangement of garments. The countryside too has its splendors, and so does the forest. Our enemies know how to adapt, to the variety of countries, to the circumstance of places, to the condition of persons, whatever serves as an incitement to the concupiscence of the flesh, to the concupiscence of the eyes, to the pride of life. I exhort you that, above all in Church, you come with that modesty which the Apostle Paul recommends; in short, let your whole ornament consist in pleasing the eyes of God. You Wives, be subordinate to your Husbands, imitating Sarah, wife of the Patriarch Abraham, who is given to you as a model in submission, in respect, in good works, in courage amid all the misfortunes of this life. Mothers, be diligent in the governance of your household; guard your Daughters as a treasure entrusted to you by the

Eternal Father. Daughters, obey your Mothers, and do not sadden the old age of those who raised you by neglecting to keep intact that precious gift you received from God in Baptism. Our Temple is holy and spiritual, and a single thought or a single desire is enough to profane it and violate its Holiness.

Our material Temples, our Churches, my most beloved Children, are honored and adorned in order that the Sacrifice may be offered in them. How we ought to honor and adorn the Temple of God which is our soul, I have said thus far. To speak to you, then, of the Sacrifice you must offer, I will make use of the words of the holy Apostle Paul (Romans 12:1 ff.), saying with him: I beseech you, by the infinite graces you have received from God, consecrate to Him your bodies, as living, holy, and unblemished offerings. He once accepted carnal sacrifices, but today He holds them in abomination: He wishes to be worshipped in spirit, and this is the only reasonable worship you can render Him, and your heart is a Holocaust owed to Him; for the World is no longer your Father, nor do you any longer follow the World's maxims, nor do you esteem its grandeurs, nor love its pleasures — living now a new kind of life, have new desires and new thoughts. Be animated by a new spirit, and inquire diligently into what God desires of you, which are actions holy, perfect, and pleasing in His sight. Refer everything to God, to His Glory, even your most ordinary actions, acknowledging that everything comes from Him, and rendering Him thanks for it through Jesus Christ.

The holy Bishop of Auxerre, Germanus, under whose title this Church is dedicated, gives you a shining example of this. Called by an extraordinary vocation to the Episcopate to combat the proud remnants of Pelagianism, he devoted himself wholly, in word and in deed, to instructing his People in the necessity of acknowledging that everything comes from God, that everything we owe must be referred back to Him, without which every human action is sin. Imitate this great Luminary of the Church, and, your actions being thus sanctified, they will be true Prayers, and will form part of that spiritual and universal Sacrifice which is owed to God. Your soul will then be a holy Temple of God, and may truly be called a House of Prayer: *Domus mea Domus orationis* — a House where a perpetual Sacrifice is offered to God.

Yours, then, most beloved Brothers, I say again with St. Bernard, is the Feast of this day — the Feast of the Dedication and Consecration of your own souls. Celebrate it in this spirit, renewing the promises already made in Baptism; and the Feast of this day will then be for you a pledge of that which we shall enjoy at the last Dedication, which will take place in the holy City of God, in the Heavenly Jerusalem, after the general Resurrection.

III. Homily for the Consecration of the Church of S. Girolamo a Collina, *25 September 1785*

The Feast of the Dedication of Churches, my most beloved Children, is generally so neglected that it is astonishing how Christians, who aspire to eternal Blessedness, look upon this Feast as though it were scarcely their own, and are sometimes even unaware whether it is celebrated at all, or on what day, in their own Parish. As for you, whom I believe to be sufficiently instructed by your own Parish Priest, I will not dwell on teaching you how this Feast is entirely yours, and how, being living Temples of God through the first Dedication and Consecration made in Baptism, you will be careful never to defile this spiritual Temple which is your soul. Thus you will make yourselves worthy, after the general Resurrection, to take part in that heavenly and holy Building of which Jesus Christ is the Architect, and of which, by His grace, you will be the stones — living stones that will form the holy City of Heaven, where our perpetual and inexpressible happiness will be the offering of all of us to the Eternal Father, through His Only-begotten Son, in praising Him, adoring Him, blessing Him, and giving Him thanks for all eternity. I will not linger over this, for I believe you already well instructed in it; rather, by way of some brief clarification of the ceremonies used in this rite, I will make my way toward speaking to you of the Sacrament of Confirmation, which I am about to administer to you this day — that Sacrament which, by filling our souls with the Divine Spirit, makes us true and living Temples, in whom, in every act and every movement of the soul, and in all things, we offer ourselves in sacrifice to the Eternal Father.

To speak to you in order: you have seen in the Church the twelve Crosses, with as many lamps burning before them from the very beginning. These signify the twelve Apostles, who carried the light of the Gospel and the doctrine of the Cross throughout the whole Earth, whence the living Stones are drawn of which, as I told you, the holy City of Heaven is formed. And since this heavenly Church is consecrated and dedicated as a consequence of the preaching of the twelve Apostles sent throughout the world to bring the light of the Gospel, the lamps are therefore lit before the rite begins — the whole of which is directed, through these outward and sensible things, to represent to us what takes place in the forming of this holy Building in Heaven.

I have blessed the water, the wine, the salt, and the ash, and have mixed them all together to make the sprinklings you have witnessed. The water represents the Humanity of Jesus Christ, the wine His Divinity, the ash is the symbol of death, the salt of incorruptibility. These things mixed together are the Figure of Jesus Christ, God and Man, dead and risen. Through Him alone can we be purified, so that we become the true Temple of God. With this water, then, I have sprinkled the walls of the Church three times, to purify them and to prevent demons from approaching them.

The Greek and Latin Alphabet written in the form of a Cross upon the pavement signifies all the Peoples of the Earth, once divided by language, by inclination, by religion, now all gathered together through the Cross of Jesus Christ to form one Body, one Temple

consecrated to God — which is the fruit of the Incarnation and the Passion of Jesus Christ. This action was accompanied by the Canticle *Benedictus*, to render thanks to God for so great a benefit.

My having knocked three times at the door of this Church before entering it must make you understand that it was not without resistance that the Devil was stripped by Jesus Christ of the dominion he exercised over men, and driven out. The Bishop's entrance into the Church signifies the entrance of Jesus Christ into Heaven, after having overcome the powers of Hell. May the Lord grant us the grace that, just as in this material Temple you have all come in behind your Pastor, so we may have the consolation of finding ourselves together in that heavenly Temple of which this is the figure and the image. But how can we flatter ourselves, my most beloved Brothers, with so great a Grace, if that Divine Spirit whom we have invoked in the Consecration of this Church does not dwell in the spiritual Temple of God which is our soul? We shall not share in the joy of the holy City of Heaven if we have not, here on this Earth, prepared within ourselves a dwelling place for the infinite Majesty of our God. Rightly, therefore, do the Fathers and Doctors of the Church call the Sacrament of Confirmation the perfection of Baptism, the dedication of the House of God and of the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Baptism causes us to be born again, gives us new life, makes us children of God and disciples of Jesus Christ, cools the heat of the passions, and represses the force of concupiscence; but Confirmation, with a more powerful effect, consumes the weaknesses that expose the soul to being overcome by enemies visible and invisible, and fortifies us in temptations, making us men of God, soldiers of Jesus Christ. By the first Sacrament, then, we belong to God; by the second, we fight for Him, with Him, and in Him, until the dominion of death is destroyed by the omnipotence of His Grace. It is then that we become true Temples of Him, in whom a perpetual sacrifice is offered. In this consists, my most beloved Children, the life of the Christian; recognize, then, the great gift of the divine Spirit that is communicated to you in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Observe how the Apostles, who beforehand were full of low and carnal notions, all weak and timid, suddenly, after having received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, proclaim with courage the doctrine of their Master, and at the cost of their liberty and their lives publicly declare His Resurrection. The outrages and abuses they suffer become, for them, occasions of consolation and joy, in the thought of becoming conformed to Jesus Christ Himself. In this way they showed themselves true Temples of God, in whom they perpetually offered themselves in sacrifice. We must commit ourselves no less than they to fulfilling this indispensable duty. The Sacrifice of adoration, of thanksgiving, of expiation, and of petition is necessary for everyone who is a sinner upon this earth. Every intellectual and rational creature is bound to honor God in His holiness, in His supreme dominion, in His greatness, in His perfections. Recognition and gratitude for the singular benefits with which He has filled us bind us to the rendering of thanks; offenses committed against divine Justice demand satisfaction; and finally our great and pressing needs oblige us to implore, through sacrifice, those goods which Jesus Christ has merited for us. Adoration is owed to God at all times, nor is there any moment in which we

may excuse ourselves from it without sin, since to Him must be referred all that we are and all that we do; through Him we are what we are, and to Him, therefore, and to His glory, we must refer ourselves and all our actions. If the gifts we have received are infinite and continual, how can we cease to give thanks for them; and if the offenses committed against God are so grave, and if our need of Him is so great, ought we not always to keep before our eyes the memory of our betrayals and of the rebellion committed against Him, and continually implore His help, both so as not to fall again, and for every other need of this life? The Sacrament of Confirmation is precisely that which gives the grace to fulfill all these duties: through it the faithful become those perfect Christians called by the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 2:9) holy Priests, who offer to God spiritual sacrifices, pleasing and acceptable through Jesus Christ. Oh, how holy, my most beloved Brothers, is the life of a true Christian! The purity of his heart, which merits that God make Himself present within it, reveals to us the holiness of this spiritual Temple; in it is seen, as St. Peter notes, not only the holiness of a Priest, who despises earthly things and has God alone for his inheritance, but also the holiness of a victim ever ready to be sacrificed for God, and to serve His glory through its own self-annihilation. To sanctify this Temple, to consecrate this Priest, to sacrifice and offer this victim to the Eternal Father through His Divine Spirit, belongs to Jesus Christ alone. These gifts and these graces He has given in a singular way through the Sacrament of Confirmation. Fittingly, then, my most beloved Children, have I chosen this day to confer it upon you, since, in consecrating this material Temple, I could find no better way to recall to your minds what is prefigured in it. The living, spiritual Temple is our souls. The perfection of the first Dedication and Consecration celebrated in Baptism is accomplished through the Sacrament of Confirmation. Take care not to profane this Temple. Perform the offices of Priests and of victim, offering yourselves in perpetual sacrifice to the Most High, by adoring Him in spirit and in truth, by giving Him thanks, by imploring pardon for your sins, by entreating the graces necessary for your needs.

This material temple, in which you will gather to receive from your lawful Pastor the spiritual food of your souls, I have dedicated to God in memory and under the title of St. Jerome, so that you may have in him a Protector before Jesus Christ. This Saint, in his early youthful years, was carried away by the heat of his passions. The Baptism he received in already mature age changed him into another man than he had been, and, by the Grace of the divine Spirit, he became a living Temple of God, of himself making, through continual penances and labors, a victim pleasing to the Eternal Father for the merits of the Divine Son. The services rendered by this Saint to the Church are very great, especially through his great study of the divine Scriptures — to the point that he was declared a Saint even while still living, by that excellent judge of men, St. Augustine. The imitation of the virtues of this great Saint will be what earns you his protection before Jesus Christ. Love for the Divine Scriptures was his distinguishing mark: have as much of it yourselves, listening attentively to the explanation your Pastor gives you of them, convinced that it is not only useful but necessary, at all times, in all places, and for every sort of person, to study this Divine book, and to come to know its spirit, its piety, and its mysteries. Reflect that feast days ought to be sanctified with readings of piety, and above

all of Holy Scripture. This is the milk of the Christian, given him by God Himself, who knows His own work; here you will learn the science of salvation, the way to become true Temples of God. Call back to mind what I have briefly told you concerning the ceremonies of the Consecration of this material Church, and, on the yearly recurrence of this solemnity, remember the promises made at the first Dedication of the spiritual Temple in Baptism, and pray the Lord to fill you with that spirit which was infused into you in Confirmation, so that you may courageously bear witness, on every occasion, to that Faith which you profess.

IV. Homily for the Feast of St. James, *25 July 1787*

It is a marvel, my most beloved Brothers, that although the Divine Master had foretold to His Disciples the passion and ignominious death that was to precede His Resurrection, two of them, forgetting the tribulations entirely, stopped to think only of the happy consequences of that death; and yet what we read in this morning's Gospel we see, all too often, renewed in the conduct of so many Christians, to whom the Cross is a scandal, even though they show every sign of loving the glory of the Crucified One. We have read that Jesus Christ, drawing near to Jerusalem, took the Disciples aside and told them that there He would be handed over to the mercy of the Chief Priests and the Scribes, who would condemn Him to death: these, He went on to say, will deliver the Son of Man into the power of the Gentiles, that He may be mocked, scourged, and put on the cross by them, and He will rise again on the third day. Then the sons of Zebedee, John and James, came forward with their Mother to ask something of Him. The Divine Master well knew their intentions, but for the instruction of all He willed that they should reveal them openly. So the Mother, coming forward, guided by a blind love for her Sons, said to the Lord: Command that these two sons of mine may sit in your Kingdom, one at your right hand, the other at your left. But what answer did so ambitious a request receive? You do not know, Jesus told them, what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I must drink? Yes, we can, they answered. Very well, the Savior replied, you will drink my cup; but as for sitting at my right hand or my left, it is not mine to grant, but is reserved for those for whom my Father has prepared it. There are many carnal Christians who, imagining the Kingdom of Jesus Christ to be a temporal Kingdom, ask for the reward without having earned it, and demand the triumph before the victory. The necessity of drinking the Savior's cup, if we wish to have a part in His Kingdom, is common to all, but this necessity is felt, Venerable Brothers, with particular force among the Pastors of souls. How much, then, are they to be pitied who think to secure for themselves a position, a comfortable life, in the dignities of the Church! The ambition of these blind men often hides itself under the veil of piety, under the pretext of God's glory, of the service of the Church, of their own or others' salvation, but the outcome soon reveals what spirit it was that guided them. Blind parents, unhappy children, who regard the dignities of the Church as something to be inherited — reflect on the reply Jesus Christ gave to the Mother of the Apostle James, and form a different idea of that regard which the Church has wished to show to her greatest Benefactors, a regard later abused under the name of Patronage. *Potestis bibere calicem, quem ego bibiturus sum? Calicem quidem meum bibetis.* Venerable Brothers, my most beloved Fellow-workers, this is the destiny to which the supreme Pastor calls us, whose Vicars we are. Tribulations, slanders, persecutions — this is the cup that we are given to drink upon this earth: but let us take comfort, for everything is made sweet when it is seasoned with charity, when the thought of being made like our Master fills our spirit and gives new life to our actions. This is the cup that the first of the Martyrs, St. Stephen, had to drink, when wicked men, unable to withstand the truth he proclaimed, stirred up the common people, the great, and the Scribes, and suborned false witnesses to say that they had heard him blaspheme against God and speak against the holy

place and the Law. This is the cup that the first Martyr among the Apostles, St. James, had to drink, when he was killed to please the Jews, who hated the Author of that Gospel which the holy Apostle proclaimed with such great dedication. These two Saints, by their example, encourage us, Venerable Brothers, in the announcement made to us by the Redeemer in the person of one of them, our holy Protector: *Calicem quidem meum bibetis*. If truth is sure of always finding defenders, the defenders of truth must always expect to find slanderers, implacable enemies. But just as the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which is truth, destroys the kingdom of the devil, which is falsehood, so we ought not to marvel at the efforts the enemy makes against us. Let us take care, however, Venerable Brothers, that in seeking to avoid falling into the hands of men we do not lose, along with our love of truth, the only resource we have against falling into the hands of an offended God. A worldly prudence, the love of a false peace, might perhaps tempt us to keep at least a discreet silence, so as not to expose ourselves to the wrath of the infernal enemy. But let us not listen to those flattering voices which tend to preserve the reign of error and falsehood. If we must be treated as deceivers, even while being sincere and truthful, let us consider that the divine Master Himself, our sole Model, was treated in the same way. Let us proclaim the Gospel with truth and courage, without mixing into it the opinions of men, and the Lord will strengthen our weakness. Let us make good use of the weapons of righteousness, as St. Paul teaches us (2 Corinthians 6), that is, let us make use of both afflictions and prosperity, not letting ourselves be cast down by the one nor blinded by the other. Contempt and reverence from men, good repute and bad, must be matters of indifference to us, when it is a question of walking courageously along the roads of the Lord and fulfilling our Ministry. In every way, my most beloved Brothers, what Jesus Christ said must come true: *Calicem meum bibetis*; but assured that we suffer not as wrongdoers, but as Christians, let us learn from the holy Apostle Peter not to be ashamed of it, but to give glory for it to that God from whom alone can come the grace to suffer for Him. If the times of persecution, such as they were in the finest centuries of the Church, are no longer with us, let us not flatter ourselves, my most beloved Brothers, that the labors and tribulations foretold by Jesus Christ have come to an end. The cup of bitterness must be drunk by all who wish to live in Jesus Christ, and who wish to preach not according to the pleasure and the passions of men, but according to the Truth of the Gospel. If the dangers that a Pastor of the Church of God encounters in these times are of a different kind from those described by the Apostle Paul, they are nonetheless no less great, nor do they require any less virtue to bear. The passions we must fight take different forms and produce different effects, but at bottom they are the same, and make the same impressions upon the mind and heart of man. If, then, the same strength and the same patience are needed to withstand their onslaught, how could we resist so much violence without the special help of that Lord whose truths we shall always glory in upholding? Let us take comfort, however, in this: such is the Goodness of God toward those He wishes to save, that He causes them to find, in the very afflictions with which He visits them, the means of sanctifying themselves through the expiation of their sins. So it was that the holy Apostle, whom we have as our Advocate, and whose solemn memory we celebrate, purged through the labors and tribulations announced to him in the Cup by Jesus

Christ that whole spirit of ambition which had made him seek the first places in a Kingdom entirely different from the one he had imagined. He came to know then that, just as the Incarnate Truth triumphed over the enemy only through the Cross, so the Vicars of that supreme Pastor cannot enjoy the triumph of glory prepared for them except through labors and tribulations. Holy Apostle, you who now enjoy the fruit of that bitter cup which you drank upon this Earth, take thought for our dangers, intercede on our behalf, and obtain for us grace from that Lord who, clothed in mortal flesh upon this Earth, was rejected, condemned, and anathematized by the whole Synagogue: may He who placed us in this Ministry grant us the grace to fulfill all its duties for the benefit of this most beloved Flock, so that, having labored for it in this life, we may pass with it into the next, to enjoy that Glory which the Divine Father has prepared from all eternity for His servants.

V. Homily for the Feast of St. Zeno, 8 December 1787

It is not without reason, my most beloved Brothers, that the Mass of this day resounds throughout with the precepts of charity. You heard recalled in the Epistle that beautiful description which the Apostle Paul gives of it in the thirteenth chapter of his First Letter to the Corinthians, where, setting forth the excellences of charity, he in a certain manner contrasts it with self-love in its relation to God, to ourselves, and to our neighbor. And in the Gospel you have seen how our divine Master, confounding the false wisdom of the Pharisees, instructs us in the precept of charity, as that in which the whole Law, and its fulfillment, consists. This is the bond by which all the members of the Church are united, forming among themselves a holy exchange, whose end is the glory of God and the salvation of the elect. Those who already enjoy the eternal goods love us as their brothers, and, being concerned for our salvation, as St. Cyprian notes (*De mortalitate*), ask it of God for the merits of our Head, who is Jesus Christ, through whom alone we live a spiritual life. In that same spirit of charity, the Saints who still live upon this earth rejoice in the heavenly happiness already possessed by their elder brothers, and pray unceasingly for the other holy brethren who are in Purgatory, that God may free them from that prison and admit them to the eternal glory destined for them in Heaven. This exchange of charity, this union and communion between the Church militant and the Church triumphant, is the foundation of the honor and the worship we render to the Saints, and of the invocation we make of them. The Council of Trent, in a few brief words, admirably explains what we ought to hold on this subject. The Saints who reign with Jesus Christ, it says, offer their prayers to God on behalf of Men (Session 25, *De Invocatione*). That exchange of charity between them and us, which makes our interests common, causes them to love us, and us to love them. While they lived their mortal life, they prayed for us, and we, full of confidence in their charity, and knowing how pleasing to God their prayers were, commended ourselves to their intercession. Death has not broken this holy exchange; rather, the glory they enjoy in Heaven has made their charity more perfect and more pure, their intercession more powerful. And so the Council adds that it is a good and useful thing to invoke the Saints; it does not say that it is necessary, because Jesus Christ alone is absolutely necessary to us, and the invocation of the Saints does not enter essentially into the plan of Redemption and the salvation of men. But whoever should neglect it for that reason alone — that such worship is not absolutely necessary — would show that he was renouncing that exchange of charity and of prayer with our brothers already blessed with God, by which the Church of this Earth is united with that of Heaven; and thus, besides condemning the constant practice of the whole Church, which implores the mercy of God through the intercession of the Saints, he would in a certain manner come to disturb the order established by God, by which the members composing the Body of the Church contribute to one another's good and salvation in various ways, and chiefly through prayer. Indeed, we have recourse to them, as the Council notes, not in order to obtain graces from them directly, but so that they may help us obtain them from God. Our one Redeemer and Savior is Jesus Christ, the same Council goes on to say, and so whatever we obtain through the intercession of the Saints, we

obtain only through the merits of Jesus Christ and in His name, since the Saints themselves pray only through Him, and it is in His name that they are heard. Whoever has the good fortune to understand the intimate union which the charity of Jesus Christ forms — He who is the Head of the Church — with her members, and of the members among themselves, sees clearly also the right measure to be kept between the two faults commonly found regarding the intercession of the Saints: namely, contempt for their veneration, and ill-regulated devotion toward them, the one leading to impiety, the other to superstition. Charity is the foundation and the rule of this veneration; and so I told you, my most beloved Brothers, that it is not without reason that the Mass of this day speaks of nothing else in its Epistle and its Gospel. The Saint whose memory we renew today is especially honored by us as the Titular of this Church, as the chief Patron of this Diocese. Let us turn to him, then, in our continual needs, in the afflictions with which the Lord visits us in His mercy. He, who is joined by the bonds of charity to us, his brothers, wretched and afflicted upon this earth, will help us to pray with Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ, who alone is our Mediator before the eternal Father. But how, my most beloved Brothers, can we induce him to be thus our Patron and Intercessor, if that same bond of charity does not unite us with all the members of the Church? Do you perhaps hope that, by separating yourselves from the lawful Pastors whom God has given you to instruct and to govern you, our holy Advocate will still be willing to hear your supplications? Do not let yourselves be seduced by the Pharisees of the new Law, who, under the pretext of false, flattering, and deceptive practices of piety, trampling underfoot the greatest and only precept of charity, would seek to break that holy bond which must keep you united to your lawful Pastor, and to the other members who live with him in Jesus Christ. In order to do to God, in Tertullian's phrase, that holy violence which wins from Him the graces we ask, it is fitting that we all pray united by the bond of charity. If you break it with your Brothers, with your Pastors, separating yourselves from them, afflicting them by neglecting the truths they proclaim to you, the holy Citizens of Heaven will no longer regard you as their brothers, and will not intercede on your behalf. Consider that it is not only temporal advantage that you are to expect from them. The glory of God, our salvation, is the end of that final union which binds the Church of Heaven to that of this Earth. Our forefathers had recourse to the patronage of St. Zeno, through whose intercession other peoples once obtained deliverance from floods. Let us, however, my most beloved Brothers, lift our minds to Heaven, and consider how, when the passions submerge it, our soul is led to a far more disastrous shipwreck. It is chiefly from this that we should pray God to deliver us, and may the Saint whose memory we honor help us with his prayers to obtain from God, through the merits of Jesus Christ, what we ask. You well know, my most beloved Brothers, how much untold labor and toil our holy Advocate had to bear in this mortal life, in order to purge the Church entrusted to him by God from the errors of those false Apostles who denied the Divinity of the Word. The spirit of charity by which he was animated, and which bound him to all the members of the Church in the closest union in Jesus Christ, did not allow him to abandon the Flock to the fury of its most raging enemies; rather, he did so much, through both instruction and deed, that, the Lord blessing his labors, many of the Gentiles embraced the Catholic

Religion, and the erring brethren returned to the fold from which they had strayed. The spirit of charity, made stronger and more constant in the bosom of God, renders your intercession, O holy Advocate, all the more effective and powerful. Do not refuse to employ it on our behalf in the battles we must wage against the enemy of our souls; and so pray without ceasing, with Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, to the eternal Father, that the Pastors may always lead the Flock to good pastures; that it may never separate itself from them; but that, all guided by one and the same spirit, we may at last come to be united with our other Brothers up in Heaven, in an eternal Blessedness.

VI. Homily for the Solemnity of Holy Christmas, 25 December 1787

The season that has preceded this present Solemnity, my most beloved Children, has been wholly consecrated to meditation on the humblest, the most tender mystery that Faith sets before us. Your worthy Pastors, my Brothers, have not confined themselves to a limited number of days, but tirelessly, and day by day, following the spirit of the Church, have instructed you concerning so important a subject: so that I may hope your dispositions will be such as are required in a true Christian. A God made man for us enters the world to begin the great work of the Redemption of mankind. What an object, for us, of humility and of gratitude! Let us then rejoice greatly, for, as the Apostle tells us, the grace of God our Savior, in the coming of Jesus Christ, has appeared to all men — not to the Jews alone, not to one particular Nation, but to all men, for all ages, without exception of age, of condition, or of sex. The Law given through Moses was indeed a great grace; but since, when alone, it becomes fruitless through the fault of concupiscence, it follows that, not being accompanied by the saving and life-giving grace of Jesus Christ, it was a Law of death and of condemnation. This grace, which is Jesus Christ Himself, is what has taught us that, renouncing ungodliness and worldly desires, we ought to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, in the blessed hope of the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who for love of us submitted Himself to death to free us from the slavery of the devil, and to choose us as His own beloved people, working in us and in all every good work. These are the things which the Apostle Paul, in the Epistle that has been read, commands us to teach, exhorting the peoples to embrace, in Jesus Christ, the new and only Master, these truths, and this doctrine never before understood.

Following, then, the Apostle's ordering, let us see, my most beloved Brothers, how temperance, justice, and piety are those indispensable dispositions and duties of our mortal life by which we shall arrive at eternal blessedness. And to begin with the first, namely temperance, you cannot be unaware how sin has deprived us of every right to the use of creatures, of which Jesus Christ has bought back for us from divine justice only what is necessary. Temperance, then, is that virtue which keeps us confined to never using them except out of sheer necessity. Each of us is bound to expiate his own sins, and to heal his spiritual infirmities — especially that infirmity which makes us abandon God in order to turn to creatures. These are gifts of God, of which one cannot abuse without sin, and it is an abuse to make use of them beyond necessity. Let us consider, then, my most beloved Brothers, that if the Church, at certain particular times of the year, calls us to do penance by forbidding us the use of certain foods, that universal fasting which sobriety and temperance teach us is a duty binding for the whole of our lives.

Justice itself obliges us to be temperate, if we do not wish to make use of what is not given to us, and contrary to the intention of our one Master: this would be a failing toward God, and an injustice against ourselves, by which we would bring upon our soul a grave infirmity through attachment to the creature. And here you see, my most beloved Brothers, how one duty is

joined to another, so that one cannot be truly sober and temperate without also being just. The justice the Apostle prescribes must be practiced toward God, toward ourselves, and toward our neighbor. We practice it toward God when we render Him what is owed Him — love, gratitude, humility, submission to His divine will. We practice it toward ourselves by doing what is necessary to secure for ourselves a blessed Eternity and to flee an unhappy one, to which, as has already been observed, temperance precisely leads us. Finally, we practice it toward our neighbor by doing him no wrong, and giving him all that belongs to him. It is not enough, however, my most beloved Brothers, that we take care not to cause our neighbor any harm, whether in temporal goods, in person, or in reputation, through words or through deeds. It is a failure in justice also to judge him rashly, since in rash judgments we take away, so to speak, from before God what belongs to our Neighbor, and thus we offend justice itself, which is God. Yet of nothing must we be so careful to guard against as the spiritual harm we might cause him through evil talk and bad example. Beyond doing no harm, justice requires that we give our Neighbor all that belongs to him. Honor and tribute are an indispensable duty of justice owed by us, and the same must be said of the forgiveness of offenses, as Jesus Christ Himself warns us in that Parable of the Servant, who would not show mercy to his fellow servant, although he himself had received it from his own Master.

But besides justice and temperance, piety is, according to the Apostle, the third indispensable duty of the Christian Life. Do not be deceived, however, my most beloved Brothers, in the practice of piety. There is a false and seductive kind, which confines itself entirely to reforming and regulating the outward man, but changes nothing within. This Pharisaic piety, which does not descend so far as to change the heart, and which, amid a brilliant display of superficial practices, leaves room to enjoy the World, is a piety that deceives the generality of the Faithful. Kept far from the more monstrous vices, such people cling to certain exercises, certain practices of piety, as the sole means of salvation, and, full of pride, wishing to unite God and the world, they then tear apart that bond of charity and unity which is the distinguishing mark of the mystical body of Jesus Christ. Until we regard the law and eternal justice as the rule by which we must shape our desires, our habits, our actions, we will not worship God as the principle and source of all our justice, of all our good, and consequently we will not have true piety. True and solid piety consists in consecrating the whole man to God. To Him we must turn in the practice of every virtue, regarding Him as the primary object of our love, as our one and highest end. The maxims of Jesus Christ must be our rule; His actions, His sufferings, our model. But oh, what a model the Church gives us precisely to meditate upon this day! The divine Infant is born deprived of all human aid, forced to come with His Mother out of His own country in obedience to the Imperial Edict. See, my most beloved Brothers, how, in this abandonment by men, and in obedience to the will of an earthly Prince, He teaches us submission to lawful powers, and instructs us to live tranquilly, without disquiet, in the state in which Divine Providence has placed us; see how He teaches us to place our trust in God amid adversities and the gravest hardships — He whose mighty arm assists us in our greatest needs, in ways unforeseen and unknown to us. Let us submit ourselves in all things to His Divine Will, and let the feeling of our heart not contradict our lips when we say:

Thy will be done. Let us desire His kingdom; and let His first coming upon this earth recall us to consider His glorious coming, which will be the beginning of that perfect and eternal kingdom toward which our aims must tend. To this the Apostle invites us in these words: *Sobrie, et juste, et pie vivamus in hoc saeculo, expectantes beatam spem, et adventum gloriae magni Dei, et Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi* — Let us live soberly, justly, and godly in this present age, awaiting the blessed hope and the coming of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Let us arm ourselves, then, my most beloved Brothers, with these holy truths, and, fulfilling by divine grace the duties the Apostle prescribes to us, let us secure for ourselves, in the holy desire of this heavenly Kingdom, a pledge of that eternal enjoyment to which we aspire.

VII. Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, 2 March 1788

A miracle so astonishing as that of satisfying so great a number of people with the sole provision of five barley loaves and two fish certainly commands our attention, my most beloved Brothers. But let us not confine ourselves, as the carnal Jews did, to considering these wonders only for the temporal advantages that flow from them. Jesus Christ Himself reproached the Jews for this very fault, wishing to show them that the miracles He worked were meant to procure the salvation of men. Let us profit, then, from the teaching some of the Fathers offer us on the concern Jesus Christ showed that the Apostles should give the crowds something to eat. But first, for our common benefit, let us reread the sacred Text in our own vernacular tongue (St. John, chapter 6). The holy Evangelist John relates, then, how Jesus Christ, having left those wicked Jews who turned to their own condemnation the benefits and the teachings of their true Master, crossed the Sea of Tiberias, and, seeing a great multitude of people following Him because they saw the miracles He worked upon the sick, withdrew to a mountain, where He sat down with His Disciples. The Passover, the great feast day of the Jews, was then near. And so Jesus, lifting up His eyes and seeing so great a multitude of people, said to Philip: Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? Jesus Christ spoke thus to test the Apostle; but He Himself well knew what He was going to do. Philip answered: Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for everyone to have even a little. One of the Disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him: There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are they among so many? Jesus said: Make the people sit down. So about five thousand men sat down there upon the grass. Jesus then took the loaves, and, having given thanks to God, distributed them to those who were seated, and gave them likewise as much fish as they wanted; and when they were satisfied, He said to the Disciples: Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. And so the Disciples, having gathered up the fragments of the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten, filled twelve baskets. Those who had seen the miracle Jesus had worked said: This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world. Knowing, then, that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He withdrew again to the mountain, alone, without any companion.

This, my most beloved Brothers, is the account given by the Apostle St. John in the Gospel of this Sunday. Let the poor find in it comfort in their trust in God, who lets no one lack what is needful. Let the rich find in this example a rule for their duties, in exercising charity on behalf of their Brothers who are in need.

Poverty, my most beloved Brothers, has very great advantages, which no good Christian can dispute. Besides the fact that the state of poverty was the one chosen by Jesus Christ in His mortal life, it is also free from those temptations and dangers to which the rich man is subject. In it is fulfilled to the letter the penance God imposed on the first man as punishment for his sin, when He told him that he would eat bread by the sweat of his brow; that the earth would produce for him nothing but thorns; and that it would be cursed under his hands. This necessary penance, imposed by God, which the rich often strive to escape, is borne by the poor

— who nonetheless have comfort in seeing how God watches over their preservation, blessing their labors, easing their hardships, filling them with inward consolations that are worth far more than all the riches of the great. When I speak to you in this way, my most beloved Brothers, I mean to speak of those good poor who lack means but abound in virtue. I say again that their condition is a truly happy one, if we look upon it with the eyes of faith. The wilderness to which the crowds followed Jesus Christ was without any human help. Five barley loaves and two fish could not have satisfied that people. But that Lord, who causes grain, fruit, and herbs to be produced anew every year to feed the entire world, well knew how to provide, even with a few loaves and a few fish, for the need of some thousands of men. Have trust in God, my most beloved Brothers, and be certain that you will not lack what is necessary for life. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all else will be given to you besides. If, lacking means, you were to let yourselves be carried away by the desire to have them, God would count you among the rich, and among the proud. A poor man who desires, beyond his need, what he does not have, is condemned as a rich man, even though he is without means. We brought nothing into this world, says St. Paul, and we can take nothing out of it (1 Timothy 6). Let us be content, then, to have food and clothing. The desire to become rich easily makes us fall into the snares of the Devil, exposes us to dangerous temptations, to unjust and harmful desires, to making bad resolutions, and finally drives us to ruin and to eternal damnation. This happens because the love of money is the root of every kind of evil, as experience clearly shows, for many, through avarice, have become unfaithful to Jesus Christ, and have thereby fallen into cruel evils, which have punished their error with that very error. I have wished to set before you at length the words of the Apostle Paul, so that when you hear that Jesus Christ said, Blessed are the poor (Matthew 5), you would understand this only of the true poor — that is, of those who love poverty, and bear it with patience. Filled with these sentiments, place a firm trust in God. Jesus Christ Himself warns you not to be anxious about where you will find something to drink, or to eat, or to wear. Consider the birds, and the other animals: they neither sow nor reap, nor have barns in which to store their harvest; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? Do not be troubled, then; leave to unbelievers this excessive anxiety. Let it be enough for you that your heavenly Father knows your needs. Take care, however, my most beloved Brothers, not to conclude from this that labor and toil are not necessary for you. God has promised only to bless your labors, and to take care of you if you are not able to work. But the order He has established, in grace as in nature, is that man should work and labor as though everything depended on him, and pray unceasingly because everything depends on God, expecting everything from Him, laboring meanwhile without anxiety and without fear, certain that the Lord will not fail to come to his aid. Without this, you would lose the advantage you have over the rich of fulfilling to the letter that necessary penance which God imposed on man after sin.

But it is time that I turn to you, rich men of this earth. See, in the example of Jesus Christ, what you must do. His attention and tenderness toward those crowds — how they put to shame the pride of those who do not deign to give the poor even a single glance! Jesus Christ

scarcely lifts His eyes and sees them, and asks Philip how they might be fed: He does not send them elsewhere to fend for themselves, even though the Disciples have neither money nor provisions to supply them. *Ite, et videte*, said Jesus Christ — go and see. Yes, my most beloved Brothers, see what you have, what you are able to give, and let neither the number of the needy nor the greatness of their needs frighten you. Give to Jesus Christ, in the person of the poor, what you have. Consider that, if He has placed more in your hands than you need, He has willed thereby to charge you with distributing it to your needy Brothers. Is it possible that you would refuse to restore to Jesus Christ, in the poor, what you hold only from Him — what is not yours, but is given to you as a deposit, to be passed, as occasion arises, into the hands of the poor? The goods called Ecclesiastical are rightly called the patrimony of the poor, since they are especially destined for their relief, nor do even the Ministers of Religion, who are their distributors, have any right to them except under this title. But with equal justice one may call the patrimony of the poor everything that the rich possess beyond their own need. The earth, and all the goods it contains, belong to the Lord, on whom also its inhabitants depend: *Domini est terra, et plenitudo ejus, orbis terrarum, et universi, qui habitant in eo* (Psalm 23) — the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world, and all who dwell therein. Since the rich, properly speaking, are but the stewards and dispensers of what God has placed in their hands, they must consequently make use of it according to His commands. Now His commands are to give to the poor whatever exceeds their need. What that need may be must be determined according to each person's circumstances. But if, in the uncertainty in which you find yourselves, you take charity as the rule of your decisions, you may be certain that, at the hour of your death, the eternal Judge will call you to the enjoyment of that heavenly Kingdom which He has held ready from all eternity for those who have aided Him in the poor. Let it not weary you that I repeat to you those words of St. Paul to Timothy (1 Timothy 6), and through him to all Bishops — words which a distinguished Defender of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ calls the Gospel of the rich: Charge them, says the Apostle, the rich of this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the love of God, who has given us all things richly for the necessary uses of life; teach them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be ready to give, to share what they have with the poor, laying up for themselves, as it were, a common patrimony: *facile tribuere, communicare*. These, my most beloved Brothers, are the precise words the Apostle bids us use when we commend the poor to you. Beyond this I will not remind you of the benefits you will derive from almsgiving, nor of the repeated precepts God gives concerning it in both the Old and the New Law. The study of the holy Scriptures is not so rare among you, my most beloved Brothers, that I cannot flatter myself you have often found there the precept of almsgiving, and the generous promises with which the Lord joins it. Unhappy indeed would be the Christian who did not make the written word of God his daily and chaste delight — especially now, when this sacred Book, translated into our own tongue and accompanied by pious reflections, has become more common among us. I suppose you, then, well persuaded of this precept, and so, rather than citing you the sacred texts, I will confine myself to telling you how almsgiving is to be done — namely, with charity, with discernment, and with justice (1 Corinthians 13). I say with charity, because even

if you were to give away all your possessions to the poor, yet lacked charity, all this, as St. Paul says, would profit you nothing for eternal glory. I say with justice — that is, give alms of what belongs to you legitimately. I say, finally, with discernment — that is, keeping a certain order, helping first your own Relatives, then the poor of your own Parish, then those of the rest of the Diocese, with that ordered charity which comes from God. Give, then, O rich, and give abundantly to the poor, willingly and with cheerfulness (2 Corinthians 9): *Hilarem enim datorem diligit Deus* — for God loves a cheerful giver. Following the example of Jesus Christ, before giving alms give thanks to the Lord, who makes use of you to relieve the poor, in whose person He wishes to be acknowledged. These sentiments were once so strongly impressed upon the hearts of Christians that among some the pious custom arose, when giving alms, of kissing the hand — not out of regard for the poor man himself, but because they beheld, with the eyes of faith, Jesus Christ our Lord in the person of the poor. Give with cheerfulness, and give abundantly, well assured that the Lord will not let you want for what is necessary in this life. I recommend to you warmly, however, the Charity boxes of each Parish. Deposit in them whatever you have beyond your need. That discernment with which alms ought to be given is better achieved when several people join in the effort. The Charity regulations I have given you, and the subsequent arrangements, assure you, as far as can morally be assured, of a just and well-ordered distribution. Parish priests must not carry out this distribution without the advice of their Curates, of the Almoners, and of other persons acquainted with the true needs of the people. We may hope, then, that the distribution will be made with due discernment. But another advantage, as you see, arises from the Charity boxes: by placing your alms there, you will be less tempted by vanity. See with what delicacy Boaz was generous toward Ruth the Moabite, when he ordered his reapers to let some ears of grain fall on purpose, to spare her the shame of receiving as alms what he wished to make appear as the fruit of that poor foreign woman's own labor: *ut absque rubore colligat*, he told his reapers (Ruth 2:16). Say the same to yourselves, in placing alms in the Charity box to help perhaps someone who dares not ask for them, and thus avoid, in giving alms, any occasion for the temptation to vanity. The present season of Lent could not be better suited to this. I have told you before that fasting goes hand in hand with almsgiving: it is, indeed, as the Fathers say, a means of making it more abundant, by freely turning to the benefit of the poor what is saved through fasting and abstinence. In times when foreign persons, not always clothed with an Apostolic spirit, came to proclaim to you the word of God in place of your lawful Pastors, on this day many alms used to be collected in suffrage for the Souls in Purgatory, and the abundance of the collections became almost a point of vanity. Do not cease, then, to help the Souls of the Departed with alms given for your living brethren. Among these I recommend that you give preference to the Ministers of the Sanctuary, when they are poor — but do not force them to find their subsistence in the necessity of celebrating a fixed number of Masses. Let them live in such a way that they may worthily celebrate it even every day; but let them not celebrate it when they lack the disposition due to it. Do not, then, my most beloved Brothers, bind them by that alms which is necessary for their living, lest the help given them with too little

discernment become the price of the profanation of the August Sacrifice. Give alms, as I have told you above, with true charity, and all will be in order.

Once more, then, I turn to you both, poor and rich alike. Meditate seriously on this morning's Gospel; and where the one finds a reason for great trust in God, who is Almighty and merciful, let the other find an example to imitate, and give thanks to God, who makes use of them to relieve the poor. And so, all living in humility, in patience, and in charity, may both poor and rich, by Divine Grace, be made partakers of those immense treasures reserved, up in Heaven, for the truly poor in spirit.

VIII. Homily for Palm Sunday, 16 March 1788

The exhortation I am about to give you, my most beloved Faithful, this evening certainly has nothing flattering or pleasing according to the world. The triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, which was the figure of His Resurrection and of His solemn entry into Heaven with His Church, even as it makes us aspire to that Kingdom of eternal Glory, obliges us to learn the means by which we may attain it. I would betray both myself and you, and dishonor my Ministry, were I to point you toward any other means than those the Apostle Paul suggests to us in the Epistle to the Philippians which we read at Mass this morning. He says: In order that you may practice the virtues I have recommended to you, I set before you the example of Jesus Christ, who wills that you be of the same mind, and in the same disposition toward Him, and toward all men, in which He Himself was in working our salvation. He was God, as His Eternal Father is, and possessed, by the rightful title of His eternal generation, all the splendor of the Divinity; and yet He willed to hide this adorable quality beneath the form of a slave, taking on human nature, living among us as the poorest of all men, and humbling Himself, in an incomprehensible obedience, even unto death — death upon a shameful cross. But from this depth of reproach and suffering God has exalted Him above all things, and has given Him a name that is above every name, making Him known as His Son, who reigns in the bosom of God the Father, and who holds beneath Him all the powers of Heaven, of Earth, and of Hell. Here, then, in brief, my most beloved Brothers, are the means by which you may share in that triumph of which Holy Church has given you a foretaste this morning: you must be of the same mind and disposition in which Jesus Christ was.

This maxim contains within it all the truths of Christian morality, and if, in every circumstance, we examine what disposition Jesus Christ would have had in that case, we shall know with certainty what is fitting to do. Take note, my most beloved Brothers, that what the Apostle gives us — to form within ourselves the sentiments of Jesus Christ, and to condemn everything contrary to them — is no mere counsel, but an absolute precept. That infected root of concupiscence which is within us will never, until death, cease to stir up desires contrary to those of the Spirit; do not let yourselves be ruled by these corrupt inclinations, but examine, in every circumstance, in every act, what Jesus Christ's own would have been. His memory will meanwhile teach you to have recourse to Him, and thus you will come to know not only the rule of your conduct, but the author and dispenser of the grace necessary to follow it. But this is not enough; be, says the Apostle, of the same mind and in the same disposition in which Jesus Christ was. It may perhaps seem to you, my most beloved Brothers, that the Apostle asks too much in wishing us to be in the disposition in which Jesus Christ was. Indeed, what comparison can there ever be between the holy, the perfect, the divine dispositions of the Head, and those of His members, who are the Faithful — who, through their corruption and natural weakness, are so opposed to humility and to the Cross of the Savior? I answer you, then, with St. Basil (*Against Eunomius*, Book I), that the Precept of the Apostle Paul obliges us to make every effort to conform ourselves, as far as our weak nature is capable, to the dispositions of Jesus Christ. This is the model we must imitate, and His very perfection is

precisely a spur, so that we do not stop along the way, but continually press forward toward that degree of perfection of which we are capable. The abasement and humiliation of Jesus Christ surpass our understanding. Being God, as the Father is, He took upon Himself our infirmities, suffered every kind of injury and abuse, and, after the cruellest torments, submitted, as though a criminal, to the ignominy of the Cross: however far a man may abase himself, he will never abase himself as much as he deserves, and all his humiliation amounts only to acknowledging what he is by nature and by sin. This difference between the humility of man and that of Jesus Christ will always remain; but it is precisely this impossibility of ever attaining His humility that obliges us all the more to humble ourselves as best we can. To be truly humble it is not enough to believe oneself deserving of contempt; one must be content with that contempt, and submit our will entirely to God — persuaded that everything happens because He wills it, for His justice, for His mercy, for our benefit, for our edification, and for His glory. Order requires, as you well know, my most beloved Brothers, that God reign over all things. Jesus Christ, then, who came to restore this order which sin had disturbed, from His very birth did nothing but obey the eternal Father, and refer every one of His acts to Him. Jesus Christ was true God, and the Divinity that was in Him could not be regarded as usurpation. Men, on the other hand, cannot exalt themselves, nor glory in themselves, without stealing some part of that glory which belongs to God. Such theft, such usurpation, I say again, could never have taken place in Jesus Christ, who, being God, is by right equal to His Father: if, then, He has for a time in some manner, so to speak, renounced this right, has lowered Himself, has annihilated Himself, He did so because He willed it, and in order to teach men — sinners, deserving of every contempt — how obligated they are to humble themselves, whatever degree of honor and perfection they may hold. Men often, in their vanity, attribute to themselves qualities they do not possess; and if they truly have them, or believe they have them, the more they pride themselves on them, and regard them as their own! Jesus Christ, as the Apostle says, emptied Himself, was voluntarily reduced, as it were, to nothing, though God, and, making Himself man — a nature that is by its condition servile before God — He willed, further, to make Himself subject to earthly Powers, and to become the servant of all men; and, by the ministry He exercised and the lowly condition He chose, He gave Himself as the price and payment of our common ransom, as a true and complete victim of expiation for all of us. Indeed, He was not content merely to take on human nature and be acknowledged as a mere man; He made Himself, further, like unto us, taking upon Himself all our miseries, save sin alone, which is their true and only cause. In this way He abased Himself in every action of His life, hiding beneath our miseries that Divinity which is properly His own, and by which He is equal to the eternal Father; and this abasement and humility of His was so great that not only did He not resist — though He could have — those who seized Him and condemned Him to death amid the most infamous and painful torments, but rather He submitted to it willingly for our salvation, because, as He Himself said, He had come down from Heaven not to do His own will, but the will of Him who had sent Him (John 6:38). Now tell me, which of us, my most beloved Brothers, can take comfort in being of this same disposition? Jesus Christ, being God, humbled Himself beneath His own servants. We, who

are servants, since we cannot lower ourselves further than our own condition already places us, should we not wish to imitate, as far as we are able, the humility of our Master, acknowledging the state we are in, and willingly embracing what our own condition deserves? But after all this, is it not true, my most beloved Brothers, that in suffering the mockery, the disgrace, the contempt of the World, we do nothing more than what justice itself demands of us? And is it not true that St. Paul gave us not a counsel, but an indispensable precept, when he told us: be of the mind, and in the disposition, in which Jesus Christ was? You heard in last Sunday's Gospel how the Jews, hearing the Savior preach those truths which confounded their pride, called Him a Samaritan and one possessed by a devil. It is nothing new, my most beloved Brothers, that the truths which most oppose our passions should be poorly received, and that carnal men should treat those who proclaim them as possessed, or as Samaritans — that is, as the Jews understood it, as people who wished to overthrow the holy Law of God. But oh, how new a thing it is to see anyone receive such insults with the same disposition with which Jesus Christ bore them! Who among us could truly say, on similar occasions, I do not seek my own glory? See with what gentleness and with what wisdom, answering nothing at all to the insult of being called a Samaritan, He contents Himself with saying only that He is not possessed, that He honors His Father, whereas they were dishonoring Him. The Divine Master paid no heed to a vague, personal accusation, such as being called a Samaritan; He defended Himself only against the charge of being possessed, because that charge struck directly at His Ministry, and threatened to undermine the foundation of His divine Mission. Let us imitate, my most beloved Brothers, the example of Jesus Christ; let us not overlook the insults that make us unworthy of our rank, of our Character, when, in proclaiming the truth, we are called emissaries of the Devil and apostles of falsehood — but in answering these insults, let us conduct ourselves with that gentleness and meekness by which we might truly say, I do not seek my own glory. As for other vague and personal insults, where there is no real need, let us disregard them willingly, so as better to enter into the sentiments and dispositions of the Divine Master. The Mysteries we are about to commemorate in these holy days, my most beloved Brothers, are a very powerful reason to be filled with those sentiments of humility which Jesus Christ showed, and to enter into those holy dispositions, without which we shall not attain that triumph which was represented in this morning's Rite. In the entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, you heard Hosanna sung to the Son of David, and, amid hymns and canticles, saw Him brought into the City as in a triumph. In these Mysteries you will find an idea of His eternal Kingdom, of His Power, of His Divinity. Indeed, who but God could have restrained the fury of the Chief Priests and the Pharisees, who shortly before had proclaimed a ban against Him to have Him arrested, and had published that whoever called Him the Christ would be excommunicated and cast out of the Synagogue? Silent witnesses of that triumph, they saw Him enter the Temple, and, whip in hand, drive out its profaners. You will not tell me here, my most beloved Brothers, that some popular fury, blindly led by the fanaticism of one armed man, could have restrained public vigilance at that moment. No: a gentle King is not ushered in except amid the joyful cheers of children, surrounded by poor people bearing branches in their hands as a sign of gladness and of peace. Yet observe, my

most beloved Faithful, amid this triumphal entry, the spirit of humility that guides Him: in the trappings of the beasts, made of the very garments of His poor Disciples, and in the retinue of poor people who accompany Him. He who restrained the fury of the great ones of this world with the power that is properly His own, and with which, as Supreme Master, He turns and directs, as He pleases, the hearts and wills of men — He could, I say, have turned that same power upon those great ones, and had them all at His side in an act of the most humble adoration; but no: the sentiments and dispositions He wishes us to imitate were entirely those of humility and self-abasement, and He wished us to take our example even from His outward appearance. Yet having given us this brief lesson in how we ought to conduct ourselves in times of prosperity and amid worldly greatness, behold, once more, the whole world in revolt against Him. The Chief Priests, the leaders of Religion, the High Priest of the holy Nation, Caiaphas, condemn Him to death as an impostor, a blasphemer of God's holy Law. The people who had followed Him, upon hearing the sentence of condemnation by which He was cut off from the people of God and placed under anathema, forgetting the benefits they had received from Him, abandon Him; and having cried out, only a few days before, Hosanna to the Son of David, in blind submission to the judgment of Caiaphas they now cry out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him. What were, at that moment, my most beloved Brothers, the sentiments of Jesus Christ, what His disposition, if not to offer Himself as a Victim to the Divine Father in expiation of our sins, and, amid the mockery of the crowds, in the ignominy of the Cross, to ask forgiveness for His own crucifiers? Which of us, my most beloved Brothers, comparing ourselves to a God made Man, does not fill with shame and confusion, considering how different our own sentiments are, our dispositions all bent on fleeing the humiliation of the Cross? The pride of man made him disobedient to God, drew him away from obedience to Him in pursuit of his own glory. The humility of Jesus Christ made Him ever obedient to His Father, and, to do His will, He submitted to death upon the Cross. Jesus Christ humbled Himself as one burdened with the sins of men, but we must humble ourselves as true sinners burdened with our own sins. Let us enter, then, into the sentiments and dispositions of Jesus Christ, and since He humbled Himself to obtain for us the grace to humble ourselves, and thus willed to sanctify our own humiliations by the merit of His, let our life be one continual humiliation; and, renouncing carnal desires, let us in all things do the will of the Lord, embracing the cross in every circumstance, with full resignation to the Divine will, imitating Jesus Christ, who throughout His whole life was obedient to the eternal Father.

Let us turn, then, my most beloved Brothers, to the Father of mercies, and implore the grace to be always of the mind and in the disposition in which Jesus Christ was, and let us say with Holy Church, in the Collect of this day: Almighty and Eternal God, You willed that our Savior should take on our flesh, and suffer the torment of the Cross, so as to give men an example of humility which they are bound to follow; grant us the grace to imitate Him in His patience, that we may be made worthy to share in His glorious Resurrection.

IX. Homily for the Solemnity of Easter, 23 March 1788

The memory of Jesus Christ risen, my most beloved Brothers, calls to my mind the terrible pronouncement of the aged Simeon, when, guided by the Divine Spirit in the Temple, he told Mary that this Child was destined for the fall and the rising of many. A day, then, of such great gladness — a day the Prophet King calls, in ecstasy, a day made by the Lord, for the supreme wonder that was accomplished on it, the reconciliation of God with Man — shall this day not be, for all of us, a day of comfort and of joy? Ah, my most beloved Brothers, a Pastor who proclaims the truth to you must not entertain you with empty flattery. The life of Jesus Christ upon this Earth cannot be without effect on us: it will be either our salvation or our condemnation; either life or death. If we remain united to Jesus Christ with a living faith and a firm trust, we may take comfort that we shall rise with Him, and find in Him our eternal salvation; but if we fail to profit from the graces He merited for us by His death, it will be for us ruin and perdition. A terrible, but a true, pronouncement. Jesus Christ, that good old man went on to say, will be a sign of contradiction, and the soul of His Virgin Mother will be pierced, as by a sharp sword, with sorrow. This Prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ throughout His mortal life, in which He was ever exposed to the blackest calumny, to envy, to the fury of His enemies, who drove Him even unto death. It was fulfilled in the person of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, when, at the foot of the Cross there on Calvary, she pondered to what end our sins had brought her Divine Son. This same prophecy is fulfilled day after day in the just, persecuted and denounced as heretics and deceivers; it is fulfilled in the Church, represented precisely by the Virgin Mother, in the wounds continually opened in her side by the unbelief and superstition of the Sadducees and Pharisees of the new law. As for us, my most beloved Brothers, how shall Simeon's Prophecy be fulfilled in us? Shall we rise with Jesus Christ, or shall the very Author of life become, for us, an occasion of ruin and of death? Holy Church, wholly intent on leading us to recognize, in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the spiritual resurrection of souls and the conversion of sinners, sets before us, in the Epistle of this morning's Mass, the means of rising with Jesus Christ and of worthily celebrating the Christian Passover. Purify yourselves, says the Apostle, of the old leaven, by which sin is signified. The Jews could not eat the Paschal Lamb except with unleavened bread. You well know that among them everything was a figure. Jesus Christ is that true, spotless Victim who has been immolated for us. In inviting us to celebrate His Passover continually, and to share in His risen life, the Apostle warns us to purify ourselves of the old leaven — that is, to renounce constantly the deeds and affections of the old man, putting innocence and truth in the place of malice and deceit. But, my most beloved Brothers, do we truly know the truth? Consider that eternal life consists precisely in this. The Pharisees, the Priests of the old Law, refused to know the truth, and this became for them an occasion of ruin, since for that very reason they were not freed from the death of their sins. But oh, how I fear that this same evil is among us! Jesus Christ is not known; I would almost say that men refuse even to acknowledge Him. Do not take offense, my most beloved Brothers, at this expression, perhaps too bold. Bear with a Bishop who fears greatly for your salvation, and fears it precisely because he loves

you. If you were offended by my candid freedom in speaking to you of this, it would prove that you do not know enough that eternal life consists in knowing Jesus Christ; but I wish to hope that, precisely because you know it is every Christian's duty to advance daily in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, you will not take amiss my offering you, with whatever strength I have, some fresh incitements to it. I told you that Jesus Christ is not known. I do not mean by this that the generality of the faithful do not know that Jesus Christ is the God-Man, Son from eternity of the Divine Father, Son in time of the Virgin Mary. What is not known, what is not understood, about Jesus Christ, are His august prerogatives. Indeed, is He not the Victim, the Priest, the Mediator, the Teacher, the Doctor, the Shepherd, the King, our Brother? If He is all of this, how can we say we know Him, when our conduct does not correspond to the sublime qualities that distinguish Him? If Jesus Christ is our Victim — that Victim alone able to appease the justice of God offended by our sins — can we say we know Him when we neglect to offer Him to the Eternal Father even in the very Sacrifice of the Holy Mass? And what else have we, my most beloved Brothers, to present in expiation of our sins, if not this Victim, who alone is worthy of a justly offended God? And yet how often do we assist, with the utmost indifference and insensibility, at that bloodless Sacrifice which our loving Lord has left us, to apply to us, even to the end of the ages, His immolation upon the Cross? You cannot be unaware that this sacrifice is common to all, and that although the Priest offers it as the Church's public Minister, all the Faithful present must also offer it, each according to their own rank. But if they neglect to unite themselves with the Priest in presenting and offering to God, especially on this occasion, a Victim so pleasing to Him; if they neglect to place themselves in the sentiments and dispositions of Jesus Christ, so as to sacrifice themselves wholly to God, and to do His will in all things, as I explained to you last Sunday — will you say that such Christians know Jesus Christ? Let us next consider Jesus Christ as our Teacher and our Doctor — or rather, better said, as our one and only Teacher and Doctor. *Magister vester unus est Christus* (St. Matthew 23:10) — One is your Master, even Christ, says that same truth. With what respect, with what submission, with what docility do we listen to the divine word, both in the Gospel and in all the sacred books of the Old and the New Testament? Do you make it a matter of conscience, my most beloved Brothers, never to let a day pass without nourishing yourselves on the Divine word, whether by reading it, or by listening to those who bring you its holy maxims? A fast of a few hours becomes tedious and burdensome to us only because the body, hastening toward its own dissolution, is impatient for the food that restores what it continually loses. And shall our soul — which can have no life but in Jesus Christ, which can have no food but His maxims — be left, not for hours, but for days, and perhaps months and years, without this necessary nourishment of the divine word? Ah, if there truly were Christians so careless of that true knowledge which alone is necessary, could we say that such people listen to the one Master of our eternal salvation? Could we say that they know Jesus Christ? Let us now also reflect a little, my most beloved Brothers, on His character as King and Shepherd of our souls. The Eternal Father, as you well know, in recompense for His profound humiliations, has given Him all the Nations as an inheritance, and has made Him our King and our Lord. We all lived once in the slavery of the devil, and He, at the price of His

own Blood, has ransomed us, triumphing over the infernal enemy. We are, then, His conquest; we are the vassals and servants of Jesus Christ. But so that the majesty of so great a King, to whom we owe everything, might not terrify us, see how this loving King has willed to temper it with the sweet name of Shepherd of our souls: the chosen flock of God belongs to Him. He is at once our King and our Shepherd. The discourse Jesus Christ gave to the Jews, recorded in chapter 10 of the Gospel written by St. John, turns entirely on proving how He is our Shepherd, who lays down His life for His sheep, who sacrifices everything for them, who leads them to good pastures, who makes of His own Blood a medicine for their ills, who guards them from ravenous wolves, who watches over them and brings back those who stray. Such a Shepherd truly deserves the love and the faithful following of His Flock. To hear, to know, to follow the voice of one's Shepherd are good signs that one belongs to Him as a faithful sheep. Without this, to flatter ourselves that we belong to Him is vain. But, my most beloved Brothers, do we truly listen to the voice of our Shepherd, following the good inspirations by which He inwardly calls us, reading or hearing eagerly His divine word, following its teachings, in short, placing ourselves in the sentiments and dispositions of Jesus Christ? If this is not so, can we say that we belong to the chosen Flock of Jesus Christ, and shall consequently have a share in His Kingdom? If the merit of His Blood, the sole price of our Redemption, is not applied to us, Jesus Christ will be, for us, a terrible King — a King from whom we shall suffer, for all eternity, a just and rigorous vengeance. Consider, then, my most beloved Brothers, that Jesus Christ must reign over us either as a loving Shepherd and Father, or as a fearsome Judge. We are given to Him by the Eternal Father; we are His conquest; we are His vassals. You must remember, however, that His Kingdom is not of this earth, but is wholly spiritual. Upon the earth are Princes, established by the will of God as His Lieutenants and Vicars, to whom we owe submission and obedience. Those err who, making of Jesus Christ an earthly and temporal monarchy, take from this a pretext to sow distrust among the peoples toward the authority of Princes, and, by making them believe that obedience is not owed out of conscience but is only extorted by fear, overturn the order established by God. In the same way, since Jesus Christ, the supreme Shepherd of souls, upon His ascent into Heaven, left many Vicars of His upon the earth to guard souls jointly in unity and in charity, those are ill-advised who, disturbing this established order, believe they may abandon their own lawful Shepherd and turn, on a whim, to pastures more agreeable, but less safe, and perhaps deadly. But no more of this, my most beloved Brothers. Only tell me whether I was right to say that Jesus Christ is not known. He is known as the God-Man, but His august prerogatives are not known. He is King, and men neglect His laws to live in the flattering slavery of that tyrant He has subdued. He is Shepherd, and men close their ears to His voice, which speaks to us in inward callings, in the written word, or as proclaimed by His lawful Vicars, in order to listen instead to the foreign voice of a hireling or a wolf. He is our Victim, the only one capable of expiating our sins, and men neglect to offer Him to the Eternal Father, taking part in that sacrifice which alone is able to appease Him. I will not remind you of the other august prerogatives of the God-Man, for I would go on too long; but since we have considered Him as our Teacher and Doctor, tell me with what zeal His doctrine is studied in

the holy Books, in the Holy Scriptures, in the exposition given of them by our respective Pastors? And once studied, how well is this doctrine followed? Ah, but too truly, if we look upon the face of the Earth, it seems that for many that time is near which the Apostle Paul warned of, when sound doctrine will no longer be endured, when truth will be set aside to run after fables and lies, when false and superficial devotions will come into fashion while the true will be neglected, when the severity of the Gospel, the doctrine of Jesus Christ, will be treated as a novelty; when those who profess it will be taken for deceivers, and false prejudices, superstition, and error will be applauded, out of self-interest and out of ignorance, by false teachers, who will follow the corrupt inclinations of carnal man, and give him poison in place of medicine. *Erit tempus cum sanam doctrinam non sustinebunt, sed ad sua desideria coacervabunt sibi Magistros prurientes auribus, et a veritate quidem auditum avertent, ad fabulas autem convertentur* (2 Timothy 4) — the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but, having itching ears, will heap up for themselves teachers according to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside to fables. After all this, who will not confess to me, filled with confusion, that Jesus Christ is not known? I was almost about to say that men refuse even to acknowledge Him. But no: what a serious reflection upon ourselves will make the souls risen in these days with Jesus Christ humbly confess before God, I will not say to you, my most beloved people, who give me so many continual proofs that you have no other study than this, our one adorable Mediator. Rather, I must take comfort in seeing that the efforts with which, together with my Fellow-workers, I labor for your salvation, are not in vain. Your eagerness to listen with delight to the word of God announced to you by your Parish Priests, the piety and recollection with which you gather daily to adore Jesus Christ in the Sacrament, invoking Him according to His august prerogatives, are for me reasons for great comfort and joy. Indeed, what can I not hope for our common benefit from that Lord, from whom alone, and through whom alone, we can obtain every grace, when I see a whole people gathered together, acknowledging its miseries and asking Him for mercy as the Father of the poor; feeling its weakness, and, finding itself amid hardships and temptations, having recourse, full of trust, to Him who is Almighty, who is the fountain of life, our refuge, our hope, the reward of the Saints — asking Him to save it not only from the ills of this mortal life, but, what matters far more, from the true evils that bring about the death of the soul and eternal condemnation? When I see you thus united, my most beloved Brothers, meditating on the august prerogatives of Christ Jesus, the Spouse of your souls, and asking of Him, meanwhile, mercy and salvation, I am reminded of that formidable army drawn up in battle against the common enemy; I picture to myself that welcome violence which the prayers of the just, joined to those of the Just One par excellence, do to the Eternal Father. It cannot, then, be said of you that you neglect to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. You already know well how greatly it profits you to study Him, and to enrich yourselves with the knowledge of the Saints. I take comfort, then, and give thanks to the Father of mercies, who has led you to follow the voice of the Supreme Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and to make His divine Word your chaste delight. To Him, then, be praise and glory forever, who has made you sharers of that Victim which is ever immolated for us, and who, when we

offer it to God, sanctifies and renders pleasing and acceptable the works it works in us through His Grace. Do not, however, my most beloved Brothers, be for this reason without fear. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is a gift of God which we merit by no account of our own. Let us tremble at the thought of Simeon's Prophecy, that Jesus Christ will be a ruin to some, a resurrection to others — *in ruinam et in resurrectionem multorum*. Be grateful, my most beloved Brothers, to Jesus Christ, Victim of expiation for us all; follow, docile and obedient, Jesus Christ, Supreme Shepherd of our souls; study in the school of Jesus Christ, our one Teacher and Doctor; be submissive to the Laws of Jesus Christ, King and Lord of us all; and then it may be said that Jesus Christ is not to you a ruin, but that you have risen in Him — that the old leaven is no longer in you, and that, your heart purified of its ancient defilements, innocence and truth now reign there. Of this, Eternal Father, we humbly beseech You, while, filled with holy gladness on this day of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, our hope, we offer You the solemn Sacrifice in thanksgiving. We pray You for this by the merits of Your own divine Son, who has been immolated for us, and whom we are about to immolate and receive in the bloodless Sacrifice, as the Passover and the pledge of that perpetual sacrifice which we aspire to render You up in Heaven.

X. Homily for the Second Sunday of Easter, 6 April 1788

The character of the Good Shepherd, under which Holy Church, following this morning's Gospel and Epistle, exhorts us to worship Jesus Christ, can be for us, my most beloved Brothers, neither more instructive nor more consoling. The Divine Redeemer, considering the true and dreadful blindness of the Pharisees in casting out of the Synagogue the man born blind, who had received from Him, besides bodily sight, that far more important sight of the soul, took occasion from this to give an admirable teaching on the Good Shepherd. Allow me, however, briefly to touch also on the first part of Jesus Christ's discourse, although that is reserved for the Mass of the Tuesday after Pentecost, since it is too closely connected with this morning's Gospel. The Pharisees drove out of the Synagogue — which is the figure of the Church — the Disciples of Jesus Christ, saying that He was a deceiver, and that they alone were the Shepherds to whom ear ought to be given. Jesus Christ, then, showed them that the Pharisees, far from being good Shepherds, were true thieves. The thief does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in some other way; he steals, kills, and destroys. You recognize, my most beloved Brothers, in this picture not only the Pharisees, but all those who, usurping the authority to perform sacred Functions without a lawful Mission, and consequently not entering by the door, which is Jesus Christ — that is, intruding into the Ministry without His order, without His spirit — steal from God the souls that belong to Him, kill them by making them fall into error and sin, and, as far as lies in their power, scatter them through seduction, drawing them away from Jesus Christ and from all true piety. Preserve, O Lord, this most beloved People from so great a misfortune, and never allow anyone in the holy Ministry, resembling the Pharisees, to lead it to perdition; and since You have come that the sheep may have life, and have it more abundantly, do not disdain to let us feel its effects, by opening our understanding, that we may grasp the truths You announce to us, and, grasping them, come to love them.

You tell us this morning: I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep; but the hireling, and he who is not the Shepherd and to whom the sheep do not belong, sees the wolf coming and abandons the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling, and cares nothing for the sheep. What a fearful contrast, my most beloved Brothers, between the good Shepherd and the hireling! Jesus Christ, the supreme Shepherd of us all, is that good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. He spent His whole life instructing us and saving us, and for love of us lost it upon a Cross. Not content with this, on ascending into Heaven He left Shepherds upon this Earth, Vicars of His Authority and of His Love for His beloved flock, commanding them to love it to the point of losing even their own lives, should there be need, for His little sheep. Of such Shepherds, who fully discharge these obligations, He has, in His Mercy, always given the Church some, and will give her some until the end of the ages. But where, and when, my most beloved Brothers? Ah, I tremble, filled with shame for myself, and with fear for you. How many Shepherds there are who seem good while all is at peace, and the wolf does not show itself at the sheepfold! You would see them lead the sheep to good pastures, feed them, and

never see them part from them; and yet, should the wolf appear, courage fails them to cry out as they ought, and, through a worldly and carnal prudence, they fall silent, they flee, they abandon the flock, so as not to risk losing, in persecution, what they love more than the sheep entrusted to them by Jesus Christ. Never allow, O Lord, this image of the hireling shepherd to be realized in me, nor in any of my Fellow-workers. Alas, my most beloved Brothers, what would become of you if the fear of meeting contradiction and hardship, and the certainty of being treated as deceivers and heretics — what, I say, would become of you, if all this were to keep us from preaching to you the most important Truths, were to lead us to turn you away from good pastures, were to bring us to announce to you a Gospel different from that of Jesus Christ? Let it not weigh on you, then, my most beloved Brothers, to follow the supreme Shepherd, whatever it may cost you. If His Vicars preach to you that same doctrine, and feed you with that pasture which no custom, however old, can alter, follow these Shepherds with confidence; otherwise you will find yourselves part of another flock, destined for eternal damnation, whose guides and shepherds are Antichrists, the Vicars of the Devil. In one flock or the other you will surely be. To avoid being deceived, then, know Jesus Christ, know His voice. He adds, in today's Gospel: I am the good Shepherd, and I know my sheep, and my sheep know me — even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father — and I lay down my life for my sheep. I have other sheep also, which are not of this fold; these too I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one fold and one Shepherd. What else, my most beloved Brothers, can it mean to know one's Shepherd, to hear his voice, if not to love Jesus Christ, to listen to His divine Teachings, to practice His Maxims? Remember that there is but one Fold, but one Shepherd whom you must follow, but one voice you must heed. Outside this Fold, which is the Church, there is no life, no righteousness, no salvation. Whoever departs from this Fold, whoever separates himself, for whatever reason, from this Body which is the Church, will no longer have Jesus Christ as his Head or his Shepherd. No reason can ever justify such a separation: *Praescindendae unitatis nulla unquam justa potest esse necessitas* (St. Augustine, *Against the Letter of Parmenian*, Book 2, ch. 11) — there can never be a just necessity for breaking unity. The love of unity, my most beloved Brothers, is so intimately bound to the love of truth and of justice, that those who truly defend its rights rarely fall into division. Prejudices and weaknesses, from which even good people are not exempt, seldom lead them into steps so contrary to the spirit of Jesus Christ as the fomenting of Schism. Jesus Christ wills, rather, that His Disciples be known by this mutual Charity, which must be the principle of the Unity of Communion. You already know that this unity of the Body of the Church is made especially evident by the Government established by Jesus Christ, and by that subordination which, in everything, terminates in unity. All the Faithful of a Parish are under the care of a Parish Priest; the common Shepherd of the Diocese is the Bishop; and although all Bishops are equal in the Episcopate — since, as St. Cyprian teaches (*On the Unity of the Church*), the Episcopate is one, of which each Bishop possesses a portion jointly with all the others, and although all Bishops, as successors of the Apostles, have one and the same priesthood, one and the same authority — an equal fellowship both of honor and of power — nevertheless, in order to represent more perfectly the Unity of the invisible, universal, and

essential Head of the Church, who is Jesus Christ, He, the supreme Shepherd, willed that there should be one Bishop established as first among the others, whom all the rest should honor, and to whom, as such, they should render obedience according to the Canons, and whose See should be the Center where all the particular Churches scattered throughout the world might gather, assured of belonging to the Body of the universal Church through the communion that unites them to him who is its Ministerial and Visible Head. This being so, since unity derives from the order and harmony of all its parts, order requires that the People be united to their Parish Priest, the Parish Priests to their Bishop, the Bishops to the Pope, and, reciprocally, the Pope with them, these with the Parish Priests, and the Parish Priests with their People — each thus sharing, through this union, in that Center of communion outside of which there is no salvation. It is not enough, then, as you see, in order to preserve unity in its entirety, to be in communion with that See which is its Center. One must also be in communion with all the Members of the Church, none excepted, and especially with one's own Pastor. It is through this, says the great Bossuet (*Sermon for the Assembly of 1681*), following the lead of St. Bernard (*On Consideration*, Book 3, ch. 4), that the Faithful must come to the Holy See, the Center of Unity. It is to break this divine harmony to claim to communicate directly with the center without communicating with one's own Pastor, who is the natural channel of this union. If you wished to attach immediately to the Head those members of the human body which, by the natural order, are joined to it through other intervening parts — if, for example, continues the holy Doctor on a similar point, you were to detach the finger from the hand in order to attach it directly to the head, would you not realize that you had made a monster of the human body? In the very same way, whoever disturbs the order and harmony of all the parts established by the great Artificer, Jesus Christ, in this mystical Body of His which is the Church — His masterwork — tends to destroy it, to bring it to nothing. Every good Christian who loves the Church, his Mother, must be filled with horror at the thought of the dreadful evil that is schism, since there is nothing more contrary to Charity, which is God. The Church is a Body animated by the spirit of charity; whoever tears from it those members which ought to be inviolably united to it destroys, as far as in him lies, the great work that cost the death of Jesus Christ. I well know that the sin of schism, like others, admits of many degrees. There are complete and perfect schisms, and there are imperfect and incomplete ones. One may separate from the external communion of a particular Church without, in fact, separating from that of the universal Church. Such would be the case of those who, breaking communion with their own Pastor, remained united to the Center and to the rest of the Catholic Church. But would such a person, for that reason, be free from guilt? One can be guilty of schism even while remaining within the outward communion of the Church; hence the pious Gerson observes that schism consists not only in the separation of members from the head, but also in the stubborn separation of members from one another (Vol. 2, p. 6). This is so true that the Apostle Paul accuses of a kind of schism both the Corinthians who were attached to the party of Apollos and those who were attached to Cephas, although the latter were attached to a holy man, indeed the first among the Apostles; and the holy Doctor Augustine, having shown in several places that one may be guilty of schism, and deserve the

name of a false Christian and an Antichrist, even while remaining within the communion of the Catholic Church, whenever we separate ourselves from any of our Brothers and make ourselves enemies of unity and of fraternal charity (St. Augustine, *On Baptism*, Book 3, ch. 19, n. 5), adds that although we may outwardly appear to belong to the Church, we are nonetheless inwardly separated from that holy union which charity forms among the living members of Jesus Christ. Let us take care, then, my most beloved Brothers, not to fall into this evil. Even indifference toward the goods and evils that afflict the particular Churches of distant lands cannot be without fault. Are not so many Christians who live amid hardship and affliction in Asia, in Africa, in America, and in Europe itself, our Brothers too? Shall that spirit of charity which is, as it were, the glue that forms and gives life to the Body of the Church, then, be extinguished in us, and be extinguished without fault? Ah, I fear greatly that this very coldness, this very indifference, is one of the chief sources leading to schism! From this it follows that we fail to value, as we ought, that order and that harmony which makes stable the Edifice of the Church, and which serves to keep the Sheep within the Fold, making them docile and obedient to the subordinate Shepherds who, as lawful Vicars of Jesus Christ, lead them to the pastures of eternal life. Observe, then, my most beloved Brothers, religiously, the bond of peace in the unity of the spirit; have a holy respect for your Judges, without presuming to condemn them yourselves. Obey, I will say to you with St. Paul, your lawful Superiors whom God has given you, and submit yourselves to their guidance, for they watch over your actions in order to give an account of your souls. You must therefore take care never to give them cause to cease from the Functions of their Ministry through lack of due reverence; for although they bear your faults with charity, God will nonetheless severely punish the contempt you show them: *Obedite Praepositis vestris, et subjacete eis, ipsi enim pervigilant quasi rationem pro animabus vestris redditurI, ut cum gaudio hoc faciant, et non gementes: hoc enim non expedit vobis* (Hebrews 13:17) — Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who must give an account, that they may do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be unprofitable for you. If every Shepherd must tremble at those grave words concerning the account he must render of souls redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, let the sheep too tremble, and fear lest they become wolves toward their own Shepherds, and burden them further with the yoke of their holy and sacred servitude through obstinacy and impenitence. Keep, then, to due order — I say it again — and since I could tell you nothing better than what a holy Greek Bishop, no less a Theologian than an eloquent Orator, once said, speaking in the presence of the minister Julian, allow me to recite to you his very words (St. Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 9): "Do not presume, O sheep, he said, to wish to guide your Shepherds, and to raise yourselves above your own rank, since it should be enough for you to receive from them your pasture, and to be led as is needful. Do not take it upon yourselves to judge your Judges, or to prescribe Laws to those who are your Lawgivers; for God is not a God of confusion and tumult, but of peace and order. Let those, then, who are but the hand, the feet, or some other less considerable member of the Body of the Church, not attempt to perform the functions of the Head. Let each one, my Brothers, remain in the rank to which he has been called, even should he be worthy of a higher

and more distinguished one, since it is certain that it will profit him more to be content with what has fallen to him than to seek another that does not suit his calling. Let those, then, who can safely follow others not desire to advance at the risk of ruining themselves. And let it never happen that the law of obedience, which rules and contains all that is in Heaven and on Earth, be violated among you, and that an irregular multiplicity of leaders, causing the lawful ones God has given you to be neglected, reduce everything to Anarchy." Perhaps it was needless to repeat these sentiments of St. Gregory Nazianzen to all of you who hear me; but since it is necessary to guard you also against the seduction of false Teachers who, under the appearance of piety, tend to overturn the order established by God, I wished to speak to you in the very words of that great Saint, hoping they would be more welcome to you, and would draw your serious attention far more effectively. Consider, my most beloved Brothers, a great Tree, whose branches spread out on every side further than one would believe. These form a single whole with the plant itself, and seem attached to it and firmly joined. And yet, draw near, and you will find many of them dead and withered, because the sap and vital moisture that flows from the main trunk no longer reaches them through the other branches to which they are attached. The natural order does not allow these outer branches to draw their sap directly from the stock; and so, ceasing to receive it from the trunks and lesser branches to which they are joined, they remain dead. The Tree itself is green and fresh, and, being immortal, will not fail, for the eternal Husbandman watches over it; but oh, how many branches there are already dead and withered, which seem, from outside, to be part of the tree, and yet are so no longer. How many, my most beloved Brothers, are the withered and dead members in this mystical Body of Jesus Christ, which seem outwardly to belong to the Church, but, lacking that spirit which alone gives life, are within her as the corrupted humors within the human body! Let no one, however, despair, should he find himself in so lamentable a state. The dead branch of the tree cannot come back to life; the withered, dry member of the human body no longer recovers life and motion. But it is not so in the Church. The divine power of Jesus Christ, who is the Head of this Body, the trunk and the stock of this tree, can, by the strength of His Grace, restore motion to the members and bring the branches back to life. Yet the established order and the harmony of things are not thereby changed. Therefore, my most beloved Brothers, keep to that order. Never disturb it by neglecting and abandoning the lawful Shepherd God has given you in your Parish Priest. Everything, as I have said, conspires toward unity in the government of the Church. There is but one Fold, but one Shepherd, who is Jesus Christ. We are all His Vicars, His Ministers, His Servants, appointed to guard you, to feed you, to govern you. Of the Flock of Jesus Christ, each of us holds a share jointly with all the others. If you disturb this established order by abandoning the Shepherd to whose care you have been entrusted, in order to run after the voice of another, beware lest you meet a hireling or a wolf. When Jesus Christ fed the crowds in the wilderness, He made them all sit down in separate groups of fifty and of a hundred. All were fed by Jesus Christ through His Apostles, but I do not read that anyone disturbed this order, or left his place to run elsewhere to receive his food. *Omnia*, I will say to you with St. Paul, *honeste et secundum ordinem fiant* — let all things be done decently and in order. And You, meanwhile, supreme

Shepherd of souls, through whom alone we can know the good pastures, grant to your Shepherds, your Vicars, an ardent love for the Truth, an unwearied zeal for His Flock; make the Sheep docile and obedient, so that, hearing the voice of their Shepherd, both Shepherds and Sheep may come, through You and by Your Grace, to those heavenly pastures where, beneath You, the whole elect Flock will gather, to live by You and in You eternally blessed.

XI. Homily for the Solemnity of the Ascension, Delivered 1 May 1788

Jesus Christ, ascending into Heaven, taken up by the power of His own Divinity, is that mystery of consolation, my most beloved Brothers, which Holy Church sets before us to meditate upon this morning. This Feast belongs not so exclusively to the Angels and the blessed souls who already form the heavenly Court, that we ourselves cannot be said to have the principal share in it. For us, Jesus Christ our Savior opens Paradise, which had been closed to us, and, in ascending into Heaven, points out to us the way to go there, through a complete detachment from earthly things; so that, if we must yield to the blessed Spirits the splendor and the magnificence of His triumph, we may nonetheless say that this Feast is properly our own, and that the happiness which flows from it is entirely for us. In the brief course of a few weeks, you well see how many august Mysteries we have had occasion to meditate upon. But alas, my most beloved Brothers, what fruit have we gained from them? How ardent is our charity, now that we have considered Jesus Christ, driven by envy and calumny, for love of us, to death — and to a shameful death upon the Cross? How has His Resurrection strengthened our faith, so that it may be called living — so that, seeing all things and judging all things by its light, we regulate our desires and our actions according to what faith teaches us? What will become of our hope, if we meditate on the mystery of this day? Will it be made firmer? Will its object, its character, its foundation, correspond to the purpose the Church has in making us consider Jesus Christ ascending into Heaven? This, my most beloved Brothers, ought to be the fruit we draw from the celebration of this feast. But before making some reflection on so great a Mystery, it is necessary to take up the sacred Text read at Mass this day. The Evangelist St. Mark relates (Mark 16:14) that, while the eleven Apostles were at table, Jesus appeared to them, and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, for not having believed those who had seen Him risen. And He said to them: Go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved; those who do not believe will be condemned. And these are the signs that will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons — ah, my most beloved Brothers, this adorable name is a terror to the Devil, a comfort to the true Christian, and a ruin to as many as invoke it carelessly, or wrongly — that is, without religion, without faith, without reverence! — but let us continue with the sacred Text: they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues, they will take up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing it will not harm them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. After thus speaking to the Apostles, He was taken up into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming their words with signs following. Jesus Christ, seated at the right hand of God His Father, bids us, my most beloved Brothers, abandon the earth and those things which here below are called goods, to seek only the things of Heaven. Reflecting on this, the Apostle says (Ephesians 2:6) that Jesus Christ has raised us up, and made us sit together with Him in Heaven: Jesus Christ is our Head, and since the head is inseparable from the body, and the two together form, in the Fathers' expression, one and the same person, one and the same Jesus Christ, so His members share in

the glory of the Head. For the same reason, Jesus Christ our Head, who is in Heaven, enjoying glory and immortality, shares in all the sufferings of His members, and in all the persecutions borne here on earth by His members. Hence St. Augustine rightly observes (*City of God*, Book 17, ch. 19) that when the Savior, with the omnipotence of His voice, showed mercy to the Apostle of the Gentiles, He did not say, Why do you persecute my Disciples, my members, but, Why do you persecute me: *Saule, quid me persequeris?* (Acts 9) — precisely to make us see the close and indivisible union that exists between the Head, who is Jesus Christ, and the members of the Body, who are ourselves: *Cum ascendit in Coelum*, the same holy Doctor says elsewhere (Sermon 90, *On Various Subjects*), *nos ab illo non separamur* — when He ascended into Heaven, we were not separated from Him.

This consideration, which ought to be our continual comfort, will give us the courage we need in every discouragement of spirit; this will be our refuge in temptations. Indeed, my most beloved Brothers, if we consider that we are already in Heaven, because our Head is there, what have we to fear upon this earth, when we have so powerful and invincible a Protector? To this lack of faith, my most beloved Brothers, must be attributed the slackness and coldness of so many Christians, who share in the exercises and tribulations of good believers, but not in the joy and consolation which the thought of having our Head in Heaven gives them, nor in the thought of being here on earth as orphans and strangers. Yes, my most beloved Brothers, we must consider ourselves orphans upon this earth. Here our father was the Devil. Jesus Christ has freed us from him, making us children of God; and so the earth can be regarded by us only as a place of exile, since the dwelling prepared for us is in Heaven. We are His Disciples. If our Master is in Heaven, let us not linger over the things of this earth, except insofar as they serve us as steps toward that heavenly doctrine which alone is necessary. We are the Sheep of a great Fold, which is the Church. Our Shepherd has ascended into Heaven, and calls us there. He has Vicars, Shepherds, upon this earth. Regard them as Angels whom He has sent to announce to you that your pastures must be wholly spiritual and heavenly. If they keep you instead in earthly and carnal pastures, so as not to contradict the passions that flatter you, so as not to displease you in your attachment to the things of this earth, flee from such men, for they are not the Vicars of Jesus Christ, but of the Devil. The supreme Shepherd is in Heaven: the voice of His subordinates and Ministers should lead you there alone, to where their Master is, whose place they hold. All of you, the great of this earth, the poor, the afflicted, the sick, the blind, whoever you are, turn always your gaze toward Heaven. There is your King, your refuge, your comfort, your light, the fountain of eternal life. *Salvator noster, dilettissimi fratres* (I will repeat with St. Augustine, *On the Seasons*, Sermon 184) *ascendit in Coelum, non ergo turbemur in terra. Ibi sit mens, et hic erit requies. Ascendamus cum Christo interim corde: cum dies ejus promissus advenerit, sequemur et corpore* — our Savior, most beloved brothers, has ascended into Heaven; let us not, then, be troubled on earth. Let our mind be there, and here shall be our rest. Let us ascend with Christ meanwhile in heart; when His promised day comes, we shall follow Him also in body. The Son of God has ascended into Heaven so that we might ascend there with Him. We cannot yet go there in body; let us go there in spirit. You will perhaps tell me, my most beloved Brothers, that I have

wearied you this morning by telling you the same thing over and over in different ways, since it is indeed true that the whole aim of my discourse, up to now, has been nothing other than to exhort you to turn to Jesus, to call upon Him, to keep Him always as the one object of your thoughts, your actions, your conduct. But am I not right, my most beloved Brothers, to urge you to turn to Jesus, never to forget that Holy Name in which is all our salvation? Remember that devotion to Jesus Christ alone can save you: every other practice, without this, will not save you. Woe to us, if, our Savior having left the World to ascend into Heaven, it should be verified of us what He said to the Jews: *Vos de deorsum estis, ego de supernis sum: vos de mundo hoc estis, ego non sum de hoc mundo* (St. John, v. 23) — you are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. But if it is necessary to remain united to our Head, Jesus Christ, by always seeking the things of Heaven, what means can we use to attain it? This is what I intend briefly to point out to you. You see clearly, my most beloved Brothers, that in order to seek heavenly goods, one must know them; and they are not known unless studied. There are, as you know, two means to this: instruction, and the reading of good Books, but especially of the Holy Scriptures. As for instruction, I must do you the justice of acknowledging how faithfully you attend the functions of the Parish, and with what attention you assist at the Catechism, and at your Parish Priest's instructions. The eagerness of parents to bring their children to Church, so that they may be instructed in the duties of Religion, will not fail to draw down upon them the Blessing of the Lord. By this means we may hope that the generation which succeeds us, firmly established in the sure hope of heavenly goods, and ever turned toward them, will yield an abundant fruit of our labors. As for Craftsmen and Merchants, I do not doubt that the zeal they rightly show in teaching their trade to the apprentices in their shops, and in training their workers in their business, will show itself all the greater in seeing that their young people, their dependents, never fail in their attendance at the Parish's instructions. Beyond the obligation that binds them as Christians, it is also easy to see that if the promise of heavenly goods — of which they are not instructed — does not restrain such persons from offending a God who sees their secret thoughts, they will also be poor and inexact in their dealings with one to whom they can easily conceal their own failings. As for those who serve in the households of others, I will do no more than urge them to take every opportunity to learn of the greatness and importance of the rewards reserved for those who, as St. Paul says (Ephesians 6:5), serve their masters not out of fear, or for appearance's sake, but sincerely and with truly Christian affection, seeing in them the person of Jesus Christ. The holy servant Onesimus (see the Letter to Philemon) can be for them not so much an advocate and intercessor as an example to imitate. Ignorance of the Law of Jesus Christ had made him a bad and unfaithful servant to his master Philemon. A fugitive, wandering through the world, he found in St. Paul a loving teacher, who, having led him to know Jesus Christ, and to give up the things of this earth to aspire only to those of Heaven, sent him back to his master so full of virtue that he later merited to succeed the holy Bishop Timothy in the Church of Ephesus. A teacher devoted to your eternal salvation, my most beloved Brothers, you will find in your own Parish Priest; do not fail, then, to attend his instructions, assured that, if you make good use of your time, the goodwill of your masters will

give you every opportunity to do so, since they too are well aware of the account they must render of you to our common Master, whose servants we all are. I say further to each of you, my most beloved Brothers: do not content yourselves with the instruction of the Parish alone, but profit also from the reading of good Books, and especially of the Holy Scriptures. These have been translated into our own language, with pious reflections added, for the convenience even of the less learned. Do not let yourselves be deceived and led astray by those who, with false reasonings, would snatch from your hands the bread of life contained in the holy Books. As long as I am confined within the prison of this body, says the author of that golden Book, *The Imitation of Christ* (Book IV, ch. 9), I confess I have need of two things, food and light. And so You, O Lord, having regard for my weakness, have given me Your sacred Flesh for the refreshment of soul and body, and have left me Your word to serve me as a lamp, that I may see the path I must tread. Without these two aids I could not live well, for Your word is the light of the soul, Your Sacrament is the bread of life.... Thus that pious author. I give You thanks, then, Lord Jesus, light of light eternal, for the table of sacred doctrine which You have prepared for us through the ministry of the Prophets, the Apostles, and Your other Doctors and Servants. I give You thanks also, O Creator and Redeemer of mankind, who, to make known to the whole world Your charity, have spread a great Feast, at which You have set before us to eat no longer the figurative Lamb, but Your own Most Holy Body and Blood. So says that pious author. And since we possess, my most beloved Brothers, two such great treasures — one, which is the pledge of those heavenly goods to which we aspire; the other, which is the sole means and the way of knowing them — shall we neglect to profit from them? What comfort it would be to me if what St. Luke attests of the Disciples of Berea, in the Acts of the Apostles (17:13), could be applied to you! They had a holy eagerness for the word of God, and instructed themselves in it by reading the holy Books, letting no day pass without reading and meditating on it; from which it came about that, having listened to the Apostle with simplicity of heart, and compared what he preached with the sacred Text, they found the fulfillment of the Prophecies in the person of Jesus Christ, and, by His grace, without any new miracle occurring, they were converted. But will it be enough, my most beloved Brothers, to listen to the Parish instruction, and to give some time to the reading of good Books? No, my most beloved Brothers, this is not enough: it is necessary, following the example of the Bereans, that you frequently meditate on what you have heard and what you have read. Your knowledge must not be sterile and empty, but must serve to apply you continually to detachment from earthly things, so as to attend to heavenly goods. In every act, in every thought, keep your eyes on the place where your Head is. *Ibi sit mens*, I repeat to you with St. Augustine, *et hic erit requies; ascendamus cum Christo interim corde, cum dies ejus promissus advenerit, sequemur et corpore*. Without Jesus Christ, and outside of Jesus Christ, there is no salvation. Even the practices of piety, if they do not have Jesus Christ as their aim and their end, are of no profit at all. He has ascended into Heaven, and, after the sorrows and the humiliations of His Passion, has entered into the possession of a glory that is His by so many rights, and of which He had deprived Himself solely for love of us. Let us take comfort, then, my most beloved Brothers, amid all the labors and all the tribulations of this life, in the

firm confidence that these will one day win for us the grace of being reunited with our Head in Heaven. This must be your aim in all your actions, but principally when you are present at the Divine Sacrifice. Reflect then, more particularly, that Jesus Christ is the offering and the victim presented to God in memory of His Passion, of His Resurrection, of His Ascension — that is, that Jesus Christ is offered to God as a victim immolated in His passion and in His death, glorified, perfected, and received into the bosom of His Father through His Resurrection, carried up into the Sanctuary of Heaven, and exalted before the Throne of God in His Ascension, that He might be ever present before Him, and plead our cause. My most beloved Brothers, if we have so powerful an Advocate in Heaven, why would we not always turn to Him in every need of our life? The Angels, the Saints, His own Virgin Mother herself, from the wedding at Cana onward, bid us place all our trust in Him. Indeed, what guilty man would be so foolish as to refuse the Son of his own Sovereign as his intercessor, his advocate, the payer of all his debt? We are the guilty ones; we are debtors to Divine justice, and have nothing with which to pay. Let us then always turn, as poor men and beggars, to that loving Father, who alone can pay our ransom. Let this, my most beloved Brothers, be the fruit of the Feast celebrated this day; and so, turning to the Eternal Father, let us say with Holy Church: Almighty God, believing firmly that Your only Son, our Divine Redeemer, has this day ascended into Heaven, we ask of You the grace that we too may be carried in spirit to where He is, so that our soul, keeping Him always in view in all its actions, may never turn toward the earth those affections and those desires which, without reserve, are owed entirely to Him, who is our one hope, our one refuge, our one deliverer.

XII. Homily for the Solemnity of Pentecost, 11 May 1788

Rejoice, my most beloved Brothers, rejoice. Our Savior, our one Mediator, Christ Jesus, from the right hand of the Father, where He sits enthroned in triumph, has sent down upon this earth His Divine Spirit, so that, filling our hearts, and dwelling within us in the fullness of His Grace, He might not only bind us closely to Jesus Christ, not only cleanse us of every imperfection, so that we might walk securely and boldly along the way He has shown us, but might also give us the strength and the courage to go forth and combat superstition, unbelief, the passions of men, and every effort of the infernal enemy. Rejoice, my most beloved Brothers, rejoice: today we celebrate the completion of all God's works; today is the Anniversary of the formation of the Church. God had promised her from the very beginning of the World, immediately after the fall of Adam; yet sixteen centuries and more passed, after the creation of Eve, without any mention in Holy Scripture of the Church — later prefigured in the Ark, the sole refuge amid the universal Flood. The household of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, which then became a great People, exiled in Egypt, gives us a further shadow of this idea. With this People the Lord made a covenant and an alliance, through Moses, when He gave the Law written upon Tablets of stone. This took place on the fiftieth day after the departure from Egypt; and so this day, which was always solemn among the Hebrews, was called, by a Greek word, Pentecost. This Feast recalled to the Jews the memory of the grace the Lord had shown them in giving them, through the promulgation of the Law, a clearer understanding of it. But this outward grace, illuminating that People without changing them, made them all the more guilty and rebellious — not that the Law itself, as St. Paul notes (Romans 7), was evil, or the cause of sin, which it would be blasphemy to say, but because, while giving us knowledge of sin, it did not give us the grace to escape it. The natural light, that law imprinted by the Creator in our souls, ought to have been enough to guide us in doing good; but since sin had spread within us a blinding penalty, and reduced our will to its slavery, it was an act of Divine mercy when, through Moses, He wrote this same Law upon tablets of stone, and made a covenant and an alliance with the Hebrew People (Exodus 19), promising that if they remained faithful to Him, and observed His precepts, He would regard them forever as His precious Treasure, as that People chosen out of all the earth to be sacred and set apart for Him. The Hebrews, seeing in this Law, as in a mirror, their own stains, and recognizing through it, as through a skilled Physician, the sicknesses that oppressed them, did not thereby receive the means of erasing those stains, nor the remedy to be healed of those sicknesses. It was necessary to turn to that one Liberator, who alone could give not only the light to know one's proper duties, but the will to fulfill them as was fitting. Thus Abraham would not have been justified by his works, had he observed the Law without faith in the Messiah to come. This outward Righteousness would have made him esteemed just in the eyes of men, and won him their approval and applause. But Abraham was accounted just before God, and possessed that inward Righteousness which alone merits an eternal reward, because he had a living faith, a firm hope in that God-Man who alone could redeem man from the slavery of sin. The other Just of the old Law were just for no other reason than this same faith

and this same hope. The carnal Hebrews, on the other hand, foolishly trusting in themselves, boldly entered into a contract with their God through Moses, and bound themselves to observe the Law, that is, the Decalogue, without seeing their own powerlessness to keep that pact. God Himself revealed this to Moses in these words (Deuteronomy 5:29): "Who will give them such a spirit and such a heart, that, obedient to my commandments, they might be filled with a holy fear of me?" Ah, merciful Lord, who but You could give this docile heart, this good spirit, which not the Law written in stone, but living faith, formed in Abraham, in Isaac, in Jacob, and in all the just of the old and the new covenant? This, my most beloved Brothers, as St. Augustine well observes, is the difference between the old and the new — that is, between the Old and the New Testament. In the first, the Law was given written upon stone; in the second, the anointing of Grace was imprinted upon hearts: *In veteri data est Lex in Tabulis lapideis, in novo autem in cordibus per Gratiam* (St. Augustine, on Deuteronomy, Question 11) — in the old, the Law was given on tablets of stone; in the new, it is given in hearts through Grace. The carnal and proud Hebrews did not heed what God had said to Moses, and what Moses later repeated to them before his death, in these words (Deuteronomy 29): "You have seen with your own eyes the great signs of God's Power, the fearsome wonders of His Greatness; but the Lord has not yet given you a heart that understands, eyes that can see, ears that can hear. *Non dedit vobis Dominus cor intelligens, et oculos videntes, et aures, quae possint audire usque in praesentem diem.*" Too thick was the veil upon the eyes of the Jews to grasp these words. They never saw the need they had for help and aid, and, failing to keep their promise, showed, through an unbroken series of transgressions, that man will always be a violator of God's Law until God creates in him that pure heart, that spirit of righteousness and justice, which David asked for when he sang: *Cor mundum crea in me, Deus, et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis* — create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. The Lord willed that, for fifteen centuries, the whole Israelite Nation should provide proof, in its own body, of the proud rashness with which it had entered into such a covenant and alliance with its Lord, without asking of Him the grace necessary to keep it. Moses, already near death, recalling to them the hardness and obstinacy they had shown toward him, with a prophetic and steady spirit reproached that ungrateful People in advance for the transgressions and iniquities they would commit. But the fortunate Age had, at last, to come, my most beloved Brothers, in which the promises made to Abraham were to be fulfilled. The Lord Himself revealed to His beloved Moses this Mystery of consolation and joy, when He told him: "I will raise up among you a Prophet like unto you; listen to him in all that he will tell you." This is that Liberator, my most beloved Brothers, whom the first among the Apostles (Acts 3:22) proclaimed as having come to the Jews, the second time he preached Jesus Christ. The Prophecy, then, my most beloved Brothers, has been fulfilled; the promise of the new covenant has been accomplished. In the old, the Law was written upon tablets of stone, and in the memory of men. The precepts of the Decalogue, which are the precepts of that Law imprinted in the heart of every man, were known, my most beloved Brothers, by the Hebrews; but that guilty concupiscence, that law of sin which, from our earliest youth, drags us toward evil, grew all the more inflamed in man, who, recognizing his own transgressions, and lacking

either the strength or the will to flee them, became, with all the greater fury and malice, a violator of the Law. In the new covenant, the merciful Lord gives us both the strength and the will to act rightly. The carnal and proud Jew had bound himself to observe the commandments, and, on that condition, eternal Blessedness was promised him. But how could the covenant be kept, my most beloved Brothers, while we remained in slavery to the Devil? What, then, was left to man but eternal damnation? Jesus Christ came, the promised Prophet, and, finding man stained with every crime, guilty of having violated that alliance and that pact he had made, poured upon him a pure water, which washes away sins, and gives the almighty grace by which he might fulfill every duty of the Law. The new spirit which He sends down from Heaven upon the Church, to remain with her until the end of the ages, makes spiritual and heavenly those who were once transgressors and wanderers. Merciful Lord — can it truly be that You will call Yourself our God, and us Your chosen and holy People, Your precious Treasure? (Ezekiel 37:26 ff.) *Percutiam illis foedus pacis* (so says God Himself, through the mouth of the Prophet), *pactum sempiternum erit eis, et fundabo eos, et multiplicabo, et dabo sanctificationem meam in medio eorum in perpetuum, et erit Tabernaculum meum in eis, et ero eis Deus, et ipsi erunt mihi Populus* — I will make with them a covenant of peace; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forever; my dwelling place will be with them, and I will be their God, and they will be my People. But indeed, O Lord, it is we ourselves who have transgressed Your Law, who have dishonored Your Most Holy Name, and made it blasphemed among the Nations. Ah, my most beloved Brothers, it is not for our sake, not for our merits, that the Lord shows us such great mercy: it is precisely because we have dishonored His Holy Name that He overcomes us with the omnipotence of His Grace, in order to be sanctified through us before the very eyes of those who saw us transgress. *Non propter vos ego faciam, Domus Isdrael, sed propter nomen Sanctum meum, quod polluistis in Gentibus, ad quas intrastis, et sanctificabo nomen meum Magnum, quod pollutum est inter gentes, quod polluistis in medio earum* (Ezekiel 36:23 ff.), says the Lord through the mouth of the same Prophet Ezekiel — not for your sake do I do this, House of Israel, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you went, and I will sanctify my great name, profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. *Ut sciant Gentes quia ego Dominus, ait Dominus exercituum, cum sanctificatus fuero in vobis coram eis* — that the Nations may know that I am the Lord, says the Lord of hosts, when I am sanctified in you before their eyes. My most beloved Brothers, I will not detain you long in repeating the great blessings with which the Lord means to fill us, once our stubbornness is overcome, in sanctifying His Holy Name through us. I will point out only a few, for your comfort. "I will free you," the Lord continues, "from all your uncleanness; I will multiply your grain, the fruit of your trees, all the produce of your fields. You will then remember the evil ways you once walked, your disordered affections; your iniquities and your crimes will displease you. And all this not for your sake, not for your merits, but for my glory. *Vocabo frumentum, et multiplicabo illud... multiplicabo fructum ligni, et genimina agri.... et recordabimini viarum vestrarum pessimarum, studiorumque non bonorum, et displicebunt*

vobis iniquitates vestrae, et scelera vestra. Non propter vos ego faciam, ait Dominus Deus, notum sit vobis." The blessed time of this new covenant, of this new alliance, my most beloved Brothers, has now come. The old was sealed with the blood of animals; the new is sealed with the very Blood of that same Mediator who established it. The blood of the victims shed then was nothing but a seal of that pledge which a proud People rashly undertook to keep; the Blood shed in the new covenant by Jesus Christ, who is the victim acceptable to the Eternal Father, gives us that new heart, that spirit of truth and justice promised by God, which, by pouring His charity into us, enables us to fulfill the Law. How foolish and ungrateful, then, my most beloved Brothers, are those who, approaching the sacred Table so rarely, neglect to share in that abundance of gifts which God has prepared for us in the new covenant: Jesus Christ, that living bread, which gives life to our souls, preserves it, increases it, perfects it. He Himself tells us that the Blood with which He nourishes us in the Eucharist is that precious Blood which seals the new covenant. Ah, my most beloved Brothers, what must we say of those who let months and years go by without partaking of this spotless Victim, without tasting this precious Blood? What must we say of those who approach it guilty of sin, or without due disposition? Will such people profit from the gifts and the benefits of the new covenant, or will they draw down upon themselves the wrath of the Lord, and bring upon themselves eternal condemnation? After Moses (Exodus 24), in ratifying the old covenant of the Israelites with the blood of the victims, had performed the sprinkling of the blood, he went up the mountain with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and with the seventy Elders of the People, and all of them saw the God of Israel. And for a Christian, who is not only sprinkled with the Blood of the new covenant, but who, in the Eucharist, has fed and nourished his soul on this adorable flesh, on the precious Blood of this eternal Victim, what remains but to ascend to Heaven, there to see and openly enjoy what he received on earth veiled and hidden? From this alone, my most beloved Brothers, you clearly see the excellence of the new covenant over the old. That old covenant was too imperfect, through the fault of man, who had bound himself to observe God's Commandments without the strength to fulfill what he promised. Jesus Christ, who is the end, and, so to speak, the completion and the fulfillment of the Law, in order to justify all who believe in Him, has added to the precept of Righteousness the gift of that very Righteousness, and, in place of the rash promise of proud man, has substituted the confession of one's own weakness, reliance on the almighty power of Divine Grace, and living trust in His help. The Commandments of God contained in the Decalogue are the same in the old covenant and in the new; the same, too, was the promised reward — namely, eternal blessedness. But in the old, God commanded; in the new, our Redeemer enables us to fulfill the Commandments. That old covenant, that alliance, was constantly broken, and man remained ever a sinner and unjust; in the new, the Redeemer blots out sin, clothes man in true righteousness, and gives him the strength and the will to observe the Law exactly, and thus makes him worthy of that reward, which is entirely the grace of the Mediator. I do not know, my most beloved Brothers, whether this morning's discourse has seemed to some of you either too weighty or ill-suited to the occasion. My concern to make myself clear on so sublime a Mystery, so as to be understood by the simple and the less learned, will be my

excuse before the wise. As for the subject itself, I could have chosen none more fitting or better suited to the day. Today falls the annual solemnity of the formation of the Church; this is the day on which, as the seal of the new covenant, the Divine Spirit descends upon this Church, to remain with her until the end of the ages, according to the promise God made. This is that Spirit of consolation and strength which enables us to fulfill the promises we made at our Baptism; this is that pure water which cleanses us of every stain, comforts us, and leads us to the observance of all the Divine Commandments. Of what else, then, ought I to have spoken to you? Holy Church, in today's Epistle, suggests to me precisely the same thing. The Divine Writer tells us (Acts 2) that when the fifty days from Easter were completed, all the Disciples of Jesus Christ being together in one place, suddenly there was heard a great sound, as of a strong and rushing wind, coming from Heaven, which filled the whole house where they were sitting. At the same time they saw what appeared to be tongues of fire, which parted and rested upon each of them. All of them were immediately filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in different languages, according as the Divine Spirit put the words into their mouths. Now at that time there were in Jerusalem devout Jews from every Nation, men fearing God. When the report of this wonder, which had occurred in the house where the Disciples of Jesus Christ were gathered, spread abroad, a great number of them assembled, and were all amazed to hear them speaking each in his own language, and said among themselves: Are not all these who speak Galileans? How is it, then, that we hear them, each of us, in our own tongue? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, those who dwell in Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the part of Libya near Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians — we all hear them speaking, each in our own tongue, the wonders of God. Allow me, my most beloved Brothers, to make only a few brief observations on this sacred Text, since I have already kept you far too long this morning. The Disciples were together, united, when the Divine Spirit came down upon them. Notice, my most beloved Brothers, how this Spirit of truth and grace is given only to the House of unity — that is, to the Church: outside of her, it is sought in vain. The old Law was a Law of fear, which, being unable to bring us to the observance of its precepts, showed the need for a Law of love. The sound, as of a mighty rushing wind from Heaven, at the descent of the Holy Spirit, shows us how God prepares the heart of man to pass from fear to love: when the Spirit of God is within us, He drives out all fear, lifts our minds to Heaven, and gives us strength and courage to proclaim the truth everywhere, in deed as in word. If this Divine Spirit is the one who puts the words into our mouths, what wonders may we not still see in our own day, my most beloved Brothers? The Disciples of Jesus Christ, poor, lowly, unlearned, suddenly became wise, and confounded the learned men of their age. But notice only, my most beloved Brothers, the gift of tongues, which the Lord granted them for the benefit of others. On the occasion of the solemnity of Pentecost, a great gathering of Jews of different Nations and different languages had assembled in Jerusalem. The loving Lord, who, according to the ancient promises, had kept the Nation of Israel foremost in mind in the application of His mercies, willed that all the Israelites should be made aware of the wonders the Apostles were to proclaim; and since the common language of the country was not

understood by so many Foreigners, He infused into the Disciples, by an astonishing miracle, knowledge of as many different languages as there were different Nations gathered at that time in Jerusalem. What other purpose could this miracle have had, but that all might be able to hear the divine word proclaimed to them? My most beloved Brothers, now that your Pastors, the Vicars of Jesus Christ, have in so many ways provided you with good Books, and with the divine word itself translated into our own vernacular tongue, will you neglect such beneficial provisions? If the Parish Priests in the countryside, too burdened by sacred functions and the duties of their Ministry, cannot offer you a more extended reading of Holy Scripture, how much comfort it would give them to see some good member of the Faithful, after the other functions of the Parish, relieve them in this so necessary practice, by calmly reading to the People from one of the books published for the common edification? *The History of the Old and New Testament, with Pious Reflections*, by Royaumont, is a book within everyone's reach, and one whose cost does not exceed the means of even the poorest. I cannot recommend it to you enough, that it be read together in the evening within Christian Households. As for the Catechism on the Person of Jesus Christ, and on the adorable Sacrament, set into devout hymns — even if its form does not now serve for edification, let this not lead us to abandon the consideration of the Mysteries and the august prerogatives of the God-Man; nor let it ever be true that, in our homes or in the open countryside, this adorable Name is replaced by profane songs and words. May the Divine Spirit, who on this day put words into the mouths of the Disciples, put them always upon our own tongue, and we may be sure that nothing will be heard but the adorable Name of Jesus Christ. My most beloved Brothers, if you gather up, in brief, this perhaps too lengthy discourse of mine, you will observe that God's holy Law, imprinted within us, though meant to be the rule of our actions, was obscured by sin, and general blindness no longer allowed it to be seen: God, in His mercy, wrote it, for the common clarity of all, upon tablets of stone, and promised eternal blessedness to whoever observed it. Proud man undertook to observe it by his own strength. The trial of many centuries convinced him of his guilt and of his folly, and at last the desire of the Saints was fulfilled, when the eternal Father sent the Angel of peace to negotiate a new covenant, and the Divine Spirit, infused into the hearts of men, made known to them the Law, and enabled them to fulfill it. I fear, my most beloved Brothers, that some among you may resemble those who lived before the written Law, and who perished without the Law — not because the Law was not meant for them too, but because, blinded by sin, they never saw it. I fear, I say, my most beloved Brothers, that some may resemble them through mere neglect of instructing themselves. But how many more there are who belong to the new covenant, and who, knowing the Law, do not fulfill it, because, like the Pelagians, they trust in their own strength, and do not turn to that Spirit who alone can give the strength and the will to act rightly. Great God of mercies, we are within the Church — that is, within that House which alone receives the Holy Spirit You send: never abandon this People, gathered in Your Holy Name, but pour out upon it, and upon its Shepherds, Your Vicars, that same abundance of Graces with which You filled the souls of Your beloved Disciples on that day when You formed the Church by the descent of Your Consoling Spirit.

XIII. Homily Delivered in the Parish Church of Sammarcello for the Monthly Commemoration of the Dead, given on the day after the Solemn Consecration of that Church, 7 July 1788

Since the bond of unity, my most beloved Brothers, is charity, it may be said that charity is the principle, the foundation, the end, and the purpose of our holy Religion. The Divine Founder of that Church — which was meant to be the one Temple worthy of His Majesty — in prescribing the acts of worship which intelligent Creatures owed to God, reduced everything to charity. Indeed, as St. Gregory observes (Homily 27 on the Gospels), the various duties He set before us are like so many branches, all springing from charity, which is their one root. Of this truth I gave you a brief account when I presented to you the Constitutions of the Confraternity that takes its name from Charity; but a far wider field for meditating on it was given you in the solemnity of this Church's Dedication. All the actions and the prayers that accompanied the sacred Rite of Consecration of this material Temple gave you a shadow of what the eternal Artificer accomplishes in the spiritual Temple, of which this one is the figure and the image. The Elect are the stones that form the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. Until they have been well cut and smoothed by the hammer of the tribulations of this mortal life, and until they have been purged by fire of every impurity, these stones cannot enter into the Building of the holy City. Yet all of them are destined and chosen by the infallible and almighty Artificer, according to His will and good pleasure, and not one of them can perish or be left behind. These Stones, my most beloved Brothers, are, as I have told you, the Saints chosen by God; and since the mortar that joins them and holds them together is Charity, the holy Prophet says that all the parts of the heavenly Jerusalem have a necessary relation to one another, and converge toward unity: *cujus participatio ejus in idipsum* (Psalm 122) — a city that is bound firmly together. It is true that this sacred Temple will not reach its perfection until the death of the last of the Elect, and only then will it be known who truly are those blessed souls who, by the Mercy of the Most High alone, found merit in their gratuitous Predestination to Glory. But precisely because we do not know this, my most beloved Brothers, we cannot, on our own judgment, exclude anyone from sharing in those goods which the Charity of our Divine Lawgiver wills to be common within His Church. He who is able to raise up true children of Abraham even from the roughest stones may perhaps have destined for His eternal building those very stones which we sometimes think we ought to cast aside. The parts that are to make up this Temple are, for now, scattered and separated. Some are already set in place; these are that number of the Elect who already enjoy, in anticipation, within the bosom of God, that Glory which the eternal Judge will more fully grant them on the day when He must appear in all the splendor of His Majesty, to pronounce the bitter separation of the reprobate. The other stones of the Temple are either still being shaped, fashioned, and fitted upon this Earth, amid the tribulations and hardships of mortal life, beneath the just and merciful hand of the Divine Architect; or, having been taken from this world, they are having purged away by fire those stains which do not corrupt their substance, but mar their surface. These are they of whom the Apostle Paul says (1 Corinthians 3) that

they will be saved, *sic tamen quasi per ignem* — yet so as by fire — and who, consequently, make up that portion of the Church called the Church suffering. Death has broken that civil bond which once held them to us in this temporal life; but the heavenly and eternal union, founded on the Divine life communicated to us by Jesus Christ, remains firm; and this union obliges the Church that still fights as a pilgrim upon this Earth to concern herself for them, and to help them with spiritual aid, so that they may soon be joined with the other Elect already triumphant in Heaven, who already form a part of the holy Temple, and who themselves continually cry out, for its completion, in those Divine words: *adveniat Regnum tuum* — Thy Kingdom come. It was fitting, then, that after the solemn Consecration of the Temple, the commemoration of the Faithful Departed should follow, since it is an indispensable duty for us, one that flows from the very spirit of unity, to pray to God for the souls of the Faithful Departed. To grieve and be afflicted at the death of our relatives and friends is a sentiment all too natural to man, and is a fitting tribute of feeling, and even of Religion, for one who reflects on the sorrowful cause for which such a penalty was imposed upon us. But since the Faith of Jesus Christ risen comforts and assures us of our own resurrection, we ought not to grieve inconsolably over their death, as though we no longer hoped to see them again. A vain display of Funerals, and an affected show of mourning, which, to borrow the words of St. Augustine (*On Care to Be Had for the Dead*), serve rather as a comfort to the living than as a help to the dead, are certainly not what is required of us. The offices of charity we owe to them are almsgiving, fasting, prayers, and the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. Take part in this, my most beloved Brothers, with that spirit of unity that marks the fellowship of the Faithful, and do not doubt that the eternal Victim will obtain the longed-for relief for the elect souls who are in Purgatory. It is true that it is not for us to determine to whom our prayers for the Departed will be of most benefit, since the communion of Goods makes all share in their fruit, and the Church prays for all. Nevertheless, the order of Charity requires that relatives, friends, those of the same community, of the same Nation, be held more particularly in view in our prayers for the Departed. The dispositions of soul, the degrees of Charity, with which they left this earth, will however be the measure by which the Mercy of the Lord, applying to them the merits of Jesus Christ, will make itself felt to them, before setting them as chosen stones into the building of the eternal Sanctuary. Moved by these sentiments, my most beloved Brothers, show your Charity, your inseparable union with your Departed Brothers. I take comfort in being able to judge, from the way you pour out your alms into the bosom of the Poor, from the dedication with which you devote yourselves to every office of Christian Charity — I take comfort, I say, in seeing that these principles are well rooted in you. May that Lord, whose gift it is to know and practice them, grant you perseverance in them until death, so that, together with your other Brothers already Citizens in Heaven, you may one day help to form the heavenly Jerusalem. And while I pray the Lord to grant this grace to you all, and to me, join with me now in the Holy Sacrifice and in the Prayers we shall offer, in the spirit of the Church, over the ashes of the Departed, imploring for those elect souls a swift relief and an eternal consolation.

XIV. Homily Delivered in the Cathedral of Prato on the occasion of administering the Sacrament of Confirmation the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost, 13 July 1788

Brothers, and my most beloved Children in Jesus Christ, I could not have returned to you, after so long an absence, for any better reason than the kind invitation of your lawful Pastors to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. That spirit of charity and of union which, through the laying on of my hands, will descend upon your Children, and will fill them with Grace and strength to confess Jesus Christ, and to fight the enemies of their eternal salvation — this same Spirit, from whom every good work takes its beginning, will accomplish and perfect in you all that union of Peace and holy love which makes of all the Faithful a single Body with Jesus Christ, who is its Head. Blessed be the Lord, who has not rejected my prayer, but has heard it, showing toward me and toward you His abundant mercy. Of the reasons for my long absence I will say nothing. Let past events be recalled only in secret, to be wept over before the Lord, and let charity cast into eternal oblivion that unhappy night in which the Flock seemed to seek another Guide, other Pastures, than those the eternal Shepherd had assigned it. Let it be enough for you to know that, though absent from you in body, I was nonetheless always present in spirit, nor did I forget you in my prayers. If I did not speak to you with my voice, I made you hear, through printed Pastoral Instructions, my sentiments in conformity with the Gospel, and made known to you the deceits of the Father of lies, who sought to seduce you into breaking that sacred bond of union which must bind the People to their Shepherd. My worthy Fellow-workers, your Parish Priests, ever attentive to their Ministry, kept me exactly informed of your conduct, of your dispositions, of the manner in which you received the Truths they proclaimed to you; and nothing could reach me, amid so many afflictions, more welcome or more consoling than to learn of your eagerness and attention in listening to the divine Word, your devout piety in assisting at the divine Mysteries, your fervor in feeding, with the humblest sentiments of soul, upon the Bread of Life. God knows what my prayers for you were, and how dear I held my possessions, my very life, that I would gladly have offered them in sacrifice for my Flock. If it was required that I give up a position whose weight I well knew, so that another might better bear its burdens, I did even this; and the protest I made at that time — not out of cowardice, but for your good, for love of you — I am ready to renew as often as it may be thought fitting. The charity which alone must be my guide would not, for this reason, grow the least bit cold toward you, since the memory of our old bonds would remain firm even unto death. I am well persuaded, Brothers and my most beloved Children, that love of Neighbor must lead the Christian to give everything for him, since, if we must love one another as Jesus Christ loved us, how could we hesitate to give our very life for our Neighbor, when our Master and Lord gave His own in sacrifice for us all? *In hoc cognovimus Charitatem Dei, quoniam ille animam suam pro nobis posuit, et nos debemus pro fratribus animas ponere* (1 John 3:16) — by this we have known the charity of God, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. And if this is a duty for every Christian, how much more indispensable is it for a

Pastor, who must apply it to himself: as St. Paul said, writing to the Philippians (2:17), *Sed et si immolor supra sacrificium, et obsequium fidei vestrae, gaudeo et congratulor omnibus vobis* — but even if I am poured out as a libation upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad, and rejoice with you all; and elsewhere, to the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 2:8), *ita desiderantes vos, cupide volebamus tradere vobis non solum Evangelium Dei, sed etiam animas nostras, quoniam charissimi nobis facti estis* — being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you had become very dear to us. With these sentiments I have loved you on every occasion, and, whatever the trial, I will, by the Grace of the Lord, remain constant in following the duties of Pastoral charity. If, turning to the Lord, I have more than once cried out with holy David (Psalm 74): *Exurge, Deus, judica causam tuam, memor esto improperiorum tuorum eorum quae ab insipiente sunt tota die* — arise, O God, plead your own cause; remember how the foolish man reproaches you daily — I have not ceased to implore the divine Mercy for all. I know well that there arose, from beyond your own community, men from distant lands, some poorly instructed, others enemies of peace, who painted me before your eyes as a man who spoke against the holy Place and the Law; and so I found it my duty to forewarn you repeatedly against these insidious voices, through the Pastoral Letters I have published. This opposition to the Truth is nothing new, my most beloved Brothers. Truth does not triumph except after combat. There are, as you know, two rival Cities, Jerusalem and Babylon; just as there are two loves that contend within us, the love of God even to the disregard of ourselves, and the love of ourselves even to the disregard of God. The weapons with which this battle is fought are different. Charity, Peace, Truth stand guard over the holy City; division, falsehood, error are the enemies that fight against us. Our task, my most beloved Brothers, as long as we are upon this Earth, is to pursue Babylon — not by hating her mortal inhabitants, but rather by winning them over through charity and patience, and by destroying within them the kingdom of the Devil, so as to unite them to God, in the bonds of the most perfect charity, within the heavenly Jerusalem. Toward this end, my most beloved Brothers, tend the truths that I proclaim, that your Parish Priests proclaim to you. The oppositions that arise are not the efforts of the kingdom of the Devil. Charity and peace must overcome them, so as to bring everything into unity. But when, O Lord and Father of us all, when Your Name is known and glorified in the sanctification of all the Elect, will death, sin, the Devil and his ministers, the world and its scandals, cease at last to reign upon the earth; and, the elect being separated from the reprobate, and the Kingdom of Babylon destroyed, will You alone reign everywhere, in all, and forever, together with Your Saints, and with the Son, in the unity of Your Spirit? When will it be that the prayers of Your servants, joined to those of our one Mediator, Jesus Christ, in crying out, *adveniat Regnum tuum* — Thy Kingdom come — will find their fulfillment? While we remain, my most beloved Brothers, in this expectation, let us not be cast down by the oppositions and hardships we bear for the sake of truth. Let us take comfort, rather, and bless the Lord, who, giving us a Prince after His own heart, protects and sustains us in every trial, and who, giving him the grace to know and to love the Religion he professes, makes of him an example of Clemency and Justice among

the Nations. As for you, my most beloved Children in Jesus Christ, I will once more warmly urge you to remain united with your Pastors. Fear schism as the worst of evils: consider, from the terrible punishment with which Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were struck for having separated themselves from the ministers God had given them, how great and how terrible will be the vengeance the eternal Judge will take against whoever breaks the bond of unity. If the visible punishments, so full of terror, which we read of in the Old Testament, are not seen so frequently in the New, in the eyes of Faith all the more terrible must be those invisible but unfailing chastisements which are the grim prelude to an eternal condemnation. And so, I will say to you with St. Paul, labor earnestly to preserve a perfect union, and never break that bond of peace which ought to be indissoluble, so that you may seem to be one body, animated by one and the same spirit: *Solliciti servare unitatem spiritus in vinculo pacis* (Ephesians 4:3-5) — eager to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. You are bound to this union, because together you all make up the Church, and one and the same spirit is the source of the Graces each of you possesses, and because you are all called to the same Inheritance: one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling. There is one Lord and Master of all, one Faith, one Baptism, by which one becomes a child of God, who is the Father of all, who extends His Providence over all, and who dwells within our souls for the Justification He works there: one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.

You meanwhile, my most beloved Children, who, reborn in Baptism into Jesus Christ, have gathered here to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, consider seriously whether there is in you that purity of heart, and those sentiments of sincere piety, which are required to obtain the fullness of the Gifts of the Divine Spirit. Let it never be true that to any of you could be applied those terrible warnings which, in this morning's Gospel, Jesus Christ speaks against Jerusalem and against her inhabitants. His purpose was not the ruin of the Jews alone, but also of bad Christians, of whom that city was a figure. The loving Lord wept over the dreadful abuse so many of them would make of His Graces, and wept over the terrible punishment of God's eternal vengeance, which will fall upon them. Do not imitate the Jews, who profaned God's material Temple, and who therefore deserved to be driven out by the Redeemer. That Temple was an image, a figure, of the holy Temple of God, which is your souls. Within yourselves you offer to Him a perpetual sacrifice, fighting your enemies through the faithful keeping of the promises made in Baptism. It was for this that you once became children of God, and disciples of Jesus Christ, who, fighting with Him, for Him, and in Him, will, by His Omnipotence, destroy the dominion of death. This Grace of strength is that great gift communicated to you by the Divine Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation. And so, while I am about to invoke it upon you, renew within yourselves the tenderest acts of Religion.

You, then, Parents and Guardians of these Children, take all the greater care to preserve in them that divine Spirit which is about to descend into their souls. Consider that a stricter account will be asked of you for the care of their souls than for the preservation of their bodies. Exhort them to be prompt and exact in the practices of Christian Piety observed in the

Parish; teach them, by word and by example, to respect their own Pastors, and to relish those Truths which, through them, the eternal Shepherd, Jesus Christ, proclaims to you.

To you, finally, I turn, my most beloved Fellow-workers and Brothers: I beseech and implore you, by the charity of the Lord, never to abandon the Truth for which you have been chosen as Ministers. These Children ask you for the Bread of Life: do not leave them hungry, nor give them, out of a base desire to please carnal and corrupt men, a bread of death. Opposition, toil, and disappointment are the inheritance of the true Ministers of Jesus Christ. The weapons to overcome these evils are gentleness, meekness, patience, and charity. Assured of Victory, let us fight with these weapons, *donec occurramus omnes in unitatem Fidei, et agnitionis Filii Dei, in virum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi* (Ephesians 4:13) — until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

XV. Homily Delivered in the Cathedral of Pistoia for the Feast of St. James, 25 July 1788

Whenever I recall, my Brothers and most beloved Children, by what means it pleased the eternal God to proclaim the covenant of the new alliance, established by the Blood of His Only-begotten Son, made man to win for us its eternal benefits, I cannot help but admire the greatness and the power of that divine Spirit, who, gently insinuating Himself into our souls, makes us embrace that Cross which was a scandal to the carnal Jews, and reputed folly by the Gentiles. Indeed, who were those Apostles chosen to spread a doctrine new and hateful to a world where, for so long a time, the Devil held his dominion? That Saint whose triumph we celebrate today with solemnity — he who was first among the Apostles to bear witness with his own blood to the Truths he proclaimed — he could tell you how, a poor fisherman, ignorant of all worldly learning, and lacking any understanding of that wholly spiritual Kingdom Jesus Christ came to found, he suddenly became wise and great; he confounded the learned men of his age, and boldly faced every danger; and, having confirmed by the clearest miracles the Religion he preached, he sealed it with the sacrifice of his own life. Even if the Divinity of this Religion were not manifest through the sublimity of the Precepts left to us by that eternal Truth who became man to instruct mankind, the sudden transformation worked throughout the whole Universe, in worship as in morals, by rough men without any earthly support, persecuted by every Power, would alone be enough to convince us that the Religion we profess is Divine. But, my most beloved Brothers, do we truly profess it? What respect do we show it; what is our faithfulness in fulfilling its duties? Ah, all too truly have those calamitous times now come, in which proud man, feeling the corruption of his own nature, yet unwilling to search out its cause, and refusing to profit from its remedy, has presumed to dictate new Laws, and, fashioning for himself a Religion to his own liking, has taken pleasure in his very corruption, and has grown obstinate in living amid disorder. The study of true Religion has, by now, become the study of but a few, and it seems that even among her own Ministers, attention to her most sublime Mysteries is sought only as a mark of vanity, or by those obliged to teach them from their Chairs. To hinder so necessary a study, there has been no lack of false apostles, who call themselves Masters in Divinity, and who, while attempting to snatch from the hands of the simple those means which the Mercy of the Lord had given them to enter into the knowledge of the holy Mysteries of Religion, have left the field wide open to self-styled Philosophers, to deceive and seduce them. The false notion of a natural Religion, whose duties would never raise us to God, and whose reward would answer to the baseness and vileness of the most shameful passions, brought shame even upon those who had proposed this new system in order to win a following in the world. Another path, then, was taken. Without denying that infection which the sin of origin has produced within the soul, it was thought possible to conceal its lamentable consequences. In the manner of the carnal Jews of the old covenant, it was thought possible to go on following, in appearance, precepts too contrary to our depraved inclinations for anyone truly to flatter himself he observed them. Christian Morality, overturned from its very foundations by these false and erroneous

maxims, has stirred the zeal of men enlightened by the true science of salvation, and humble of heart, to combat them. But that malicious spirit, against whom we must fight until the majestic coming of our Lawgiver, has suggested other means to prop up his tottering Kingdom. There have arisen in the World new dreamers, who, professing in words an empty deference to the divine Religion they do not know, have believed, in order to shape man for society, that they could dispense with true Religion altogether, and fashion one to their own liking. Just as Professors of Physics are free to hold opposing systems, to devise new hypotheses, without thereby disturbing civil and Christian society, so too these men have believed they could construct new plans of Religion, and have put forward as possible a state that does not exist, imagining that God could have given particular precepts of a Religion different from the one we are bound to profess. If, in matters of Religion, one could adopt systems with impunity as in Physics, what extravagant notions these proud dreamers would give us — men whose only labor is to give free expression to the fevers of their own imagination! But no, my most beloved Brothers, Religion is one alone: do not let yourselves be deceived by such men, who, from the different character of the duties taught us either by natural reason or known to us by Revelation alone, have falsely concluded that there exist two Religions, one natural, the other supernatural. Our true and perfect Religion is constituted by the whole body of duties taught us by natural reason and by Revelation together. This was the Religion of Adam in his innocence; this was the Religion of Adam after his sin, and of his descendants down to the written Law, that is, down to the old covenant. This was the Religion under the Law: and this same Religion is, in substance and at bottom, the Religion of Jesus Christ, which we profess. Would we say that the omission of one class of these natural and supernatural duties has no bearing at all on the fullness of that worship owed to God? Would we say, in order to defend the divinity of this newly supposed natural Religion, that the supreme and most perfect Being has given it to us imperfect, or has burdened it with superfluous precepts? You already well know that God is not worshipped except by loving Him, and so our whole Law is reduced to Charity. Adam, the first man, who received together with life the knowledge of the oneness of God, and of the Trinity of Persons, had also, at that same moment, the natural Law distinctly imprinted upon his soul by rays of the clearest light, and was given the gift of loving it supremely. This Law, later contained within the Decalogue, has as its first and greatest commandment the worship of the one God as the source of all being, of all good, the referring back to Him of all that one is, and the use, for His Glory alone, of all that one has, since everything belongs to Him. The fulfillment of these duties demands a perfect love toward the supreme Being, and it is to this love that all the Precepts are reduced. To the love of God was added the precept of love of Neighbor, which is an extension and clarification of the first, since we must love our neighbor only in God, and for God's sake, procuring for him the means to know and to serve God as is fitting. With these precepts, man would have arrived at supreme Blessedness, after having lived for a time upon the earth in the innocence in which he had been created. But since, having become a transgressor, he plunged both himself and his descendants into an abyss of miseries, from which he could not be raised except by the hand of that almighty Liberator whom God, in His great Mercy, was pleased to

grant him, faith in this one Redeemer then became necessary for salvation. And since the sacrifices which innocent man offered to God could not, after sin, be pleasing or acceptable to Him, the Lord ordained different ones, which were to be a shadow and figure of that sacrifice which alone could fully satisfy God's offended Justice. Religion, under these new precepts, was not, in substance, different from that given to Adam in his innocence. Those observances that existed then were nothing but means to nourish and keep alive that inward worship which consists essentially in Faith, in hope, and in Charity toward God and toward Neighbor.

At last there came upon the Earth He who had been awaited for so many centuries, the Son of God clothed in human flesh — not to loosen or destroy the Law, but to give it its fulfillment and its perfection, giving us the means to carry it out rightly. To this end tend all the precepts of the Gospel Law; to this end, the Sacraments He instituted as sensible signs, through which He confers upon us righteousness and perfection. He willed, too, that the memory of so many Gifts should never be erased, and so willed that, in the Church He founded, the memory of His Sacrifice on Calvary should be continually renewed, so that we might have a living and firm trust in that one Mediator who is both Priest and Victim of expiation for us all. These new Precepts, however, are, in substance, nothing but indispensable means to raise up man, fallen into the deepest misery, and to give him the strength to fulfill those very obligations already imposed upon him in his innocence. These obligations consisted in believing in one God in three Persons, in loving Him alone, and, by an extension of this love, in loving one's Neighbor as oneself for love of Him. This is the summary the Divine Savior gives of the Christian Religion, when, speaking of Faith, He says to the Eternal Father: eternal life consists in knowing You, who are the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent: *Haec est autem Vita aeterna, ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum* (St. John 17:3). And regarding Morality, He teaches us that the whole Law and the Prophets are contained in these two Precepts: to love God above all things, and one's Neighbor as oneself: *In his duobus mandatis universa Lex pendet, et Prophetae* (St. Matthew 22:37) — on these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. Do not, then, my most beloved Brothers, let yourselves be seduced by those false Apostles, who, out of malice and self-interest, tear from your hands, with fanciful and erroneous doctrines, those means which divine Providence had given you to be instructed in Religion, and to enter into the true Spirit of the Church in her public Prayers — means meant, in short, to enable you to confound those self-styled wise men, who, to use the very phrase of the God-Man, have arrogated to themselves the keys of knowledge, and, not having entered themselves, have shut the door also on those who wished to enter (St. Luke 11:52). Do not let yourselves be led astray by such men. Study Religion in the holy Books; study it from your lawful Pastors, attending their Instructions, and taking advantage of the means suggested to you by one who, by divine Will, has a special care of your souls. This divine Religion, whose author is Truth itself, whose Propagators were men beyond reproach, faithful Witnesses who gave their own lives for it, which has been confirmed by manifest miracles multiplied in so many lands, and renewed before thousands of men, and which has, at last, worked a sudden transformation throughout the whole Universe, in worship and in morals — shall this divine Religion not be loved, not be

studied by us, so that we may be able faithfully to observe it? Would we not deserve to have taken from us, as a just punishment, the very light we have abused — taken from us by that God who is its Author? Observe, from the Epistle read at Mass this day, how forceful are the warnings given against those who, instead of profiting from the light of the Gospel, waver in their observance of Religion. Thus St. Paul, writing to the Hebrews, said: "The higher the condition of the Son of God is raised above that of the Angels, with all the greater fidelity are we bound constantly to observe the Law He has proclaimed, and to be its more jealous defenders (chapter 2). And if reverence does not move us and compel us to this, then fear must; for we may be certain that our contempt will not go unpunished, and will bring about our ruin. For if the Law announced by Angels, which they received from God to teach it to men, carried such authority that it severely punished transgressors and the disobedient, how shall it be possible for us to escape a punishment far more rigorous, if we despise this Law, which contains a holier Doctrine, and more profitable promises? This Law, preached by Jesus Christ our Lord, and handed down to us by those who heard Him, and which God has confirmed with a great number of miracles, and with a profusion of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, whose variety need seek no other measure than that of His own most gentle will?" Struck with wholesome fear, my Brothers and most beloved Children, by these severe warnings of the Apostle Paul, resolve from this very day never to let a single day pass without studying the Religion you profess. No occasion could be more fitting than this, on which we recall the glorious triumph of the holy Apostle James. He was the first among the Apostles to bear witness with his own blood to this same Religion. From the heights of Heaven, where he enjoys the reward of having joined his divine Master in drinking the bitter Cup, he now looks with kindness upon this City, which has chosen him as its Protector. Be assured of his patronage, provided you show yourselves committed to the study of the doctrine he taught. Meanwhile, let us turn to the Eternal Father, and beg Him, in the Holy Sacrifice (Postcommunion of this day), that, our soul being strengthened by the Bread of Life, we may be ready to suffer all things for His Holy Name; and so, full of confidence, let us humbly beseech Him that, through the prayers and the example of His holy Apostle James, neither the persecutions nor the trials of this life may ever separate us from His charity, which is in Jesus Christ His Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

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